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THE

YOUNG MAN'S FRIEND AND GUIDE

Through Life to Immortality.

THE YOUNG MAN'S

Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality

BY

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

EDITED BY HIS SON.

Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory.

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PREFACE.

I INSCRIBE this volume to every young man who, by the prompting of his own mind, or by the persuasion of others, shall be induced to peruse it. To every such youth I say, with all seriousness and earnestness, ponder well its title, "The Young Man's Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality." Do you desire a friend? I offer myself: and I believe you will find me to be such in these pages. Do you need a guide through life, with all its duties, temptations, and perplexities? I am willing to perform this service for you; and I dare pledge the truth, power, and love of God, that if, by His grace, sought by faith in Christ and fervent prayer, you follow the directions here laid down, you will rise to respectability, usefulness, and comfort in this world, and everlasting happiness in the next.

Eternal and Almighty God! Thou source of light,

love, and purity, who didst send Thy seraph with a coal from off Thine altar to purify Thy prophet's lips; and didst cause thine Holy Spirit to descend, like cloven tongues of flame, upon the heads of Thine apostles; and who art still willing to grant wisdom to all who seek it through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; send down Thy blessing upon the youth of our age and nation; and grant, in Thy great mercy, that many of them may by this volume be guided in safety through the dangers of this sinful world, and led, by patient continuance in well-doing, to glory, honour, and immortality, in the world to come. Amen.

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CHAPTER I.

PREPARATION FOR LIFE.

Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. PROVERBS iv, 25, 26.

I THINK you cannot be ignorant, Young Men, that I have felt a great solicitude for your moral and spiritual welfare, and have taken some pains to promote it. I say, your moral and spiritual welfare; for in an age like the present, when education is so much improved, and so widely extended, when the discoveries of science and the inventions of art have been so rapidly multiplied, and the means of knowing them have been placed to such an extent within the reach of the multitude, there is danger lest that which is moral and spiritual should be neglected amidst the attention to that which is merely intellectual; lest talents should be appreciated more highly than virtues, and secular be more eagerly sought than religious knowledge. Yet it must be obvious to you upon reflection, that happiness, even for this world, to say nothing of the next, depends much more upon the state of the heart and the practice of the life, than upon the culture of the understanding. Not that these are antagonistic to one another. None but infidels, or

weak-minded Christians, will ever attempt to set piety and science at variance. They are neither enemies nor aliens, but friends, and reciprocally helpful to each other. Under the influence of this anxiety to promote your moral and spiritual well-being, I have, in the course of my ministry, addressed to you several courses of plain and practical discourses; and have also published a treatise to those of your class who have left the parental roof to embark on the stormy and dangerous ocean of human life. I have been rewarded for this "labour of love," by the attention with which my efforts have been received, and the benefit which I believe they have imparted, and am thus induced to continue them, and now invite your serious and meditative attention to the following course of subjects.

I. Preparation for life.
II. Entrance on life.
III. Indecision as to religion.
IV. Amiability without religion.
V. Perplexity from religious controversies.
VI. The character of Joseph.
VII. The study of the book of Proverbs.
VIII. Failure or success in business.
IX. Emigration.
X. Disappointment or fulfilment of the hopes of parents.
XI. The importance of the present age.
XII. Early death, or review of life in old age.

You will perceive at once that these subjects are all of an entirely practical character. Speculation and controversy are, with one exception, both excluded:

and even doctrinal matter is but sparingly introduced. Not that these things are unimportant or unnecessary in their proper place, but they do not come within my design. I am a practical man, and am most at home on practical subjects: and at the same time that I believe that holiness is founded upon truth, and that christian duties are drawn from christian doctrines, and are to be enforced by them, I am still of opinion that what is practical will be more for your edification, than what is theoretical or controversial. Speculation, novelty, dry criticism, or thorny controversy, will have a less beneficial influence upon your future character and happiness than the subjects contained in this course.

My first chapter is on preparation for life. We often speak of preparation for death; and most momentous, most necessary that is, but we too much neglect to speak of preparation for life. And yet how fit is such a subject for our discourses, and your serious consideration!

The passage of Scripture placed at the head of this chapter is much in point. It is selected from a portion of Scripture which is of incalculable value, and which proves that the Bible is a book, not only to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, but to serve as a guide to them in their passage through this life, and in reference to their temporal condition: a book to form not only the saint and the devout man but the tradesman, the parent, and the member of domestic and social life in general.

In the passage quoted above, you will at once perceive that a habit of consideration and forethought is

inculcated. We must not only consider the past by looking back, or the present by looking round, but the future by looking onwards. All these are important; we must look back to consider what we have done that we should not have done; what we have not done that we should have done; and what we have done well that we might have done better; that thus from the past we may draw lessons for the future. It is true that in your case so short a space of life has yet elapsed, as to afford comparatively few materials for reflection, and little aid for your future guidance; but even youth has something to look back upon, and the practice of retrospection cannot be adopted too early. It is well to begin life with the formation of a habit of self-scrutiny and self-accountability.

We must also consider well the present, because there is always some duty now to be done, the doing of which is our immediate business, which no reflection on the past and no anticipation of the future should lead us to neglect. Still, however, we must let our "eyes look right on, and our eyelids look straight before us." We have not only memory, but a certain measure of prescience. True, we cannot look into futurity, so as to ascertain particular events, but we can anticipate general conditions; and it is a mark of a well governed mind to anticipate the future as far as possible. We should consider what in all probability is to happen to us, and prepare for it. Young people are not unapt to look forward, but rather in a sentimental and romantic, than in a practical manner, and as an exercise of the imagination rather than of the judgment. Be thoughtful then, and let your

thoughtfulness have respect to the future. Let your eyelids look straight on; and ponder the ways of your feet.

There is a world of practical wisdom in some single words: among them is that momentous word, prepare. How many evils, in some cases, would have been avoided, had men prepared to meet them! How many benefits would have been secured, had men prepared to appropriate them! How much that they have done would have been better done if they had prepared to do it! How often, already, have you had regretfully to say, "I wish I had prepared for this!" Well then, let this impress you, and guide you for the future. Let your own limited experience in the little things which have yet happened, be a warning to prepare you for the greater ones which will happen. I know very well that the opposite evil of always preparing and never acting, which is the case with some, is also to be avoided. There are many who are ever getting ready to act, but when the moment for acting arrives, are so irresolute, so timid, so procrastinating, that they let it go by. But this is by much the rarer case of the two. This chapter then meets you about to enter on life, and it gives out to you the momentous note of preparation.

Preparation is often half the doing and the hardest part too. Preparation for life! How impressive an idea! Not for one particular act, or scene, or engagement, but for the whole of future existence. Life! How much is included in that weighty term! A love of life is an instinct of our nature, wisely implanted in us for important purposes by the Great Author of

our existence. It was the language of truth, though uttered by the father of lies, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Surely then if it be incumbent upon us to prepare for everything else, it must be of incalculable moment to prepare for life, since it is the most valuable thing we can covet or possess.

But it will be perhaps asked what is meant by preparing for life? I intend then by it preparing to act well our part upon earth, so as to secure to ourselves the greatest measure of happiness and usefulness in this world and eternal happiness in the world to come: preparing to live successfully, religiously, usefully, and happily, so as to secure to ourselves the promise of God to Abraham: "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

The injunction to prepare for life implies that whatever constitutes the felicity and usefulness of life must be matter of choice, pursuit and labour; that it will not come spontaneously. This is very true. The continuance of even existence itself, is not independent of man's own volition, action, and preparation. We do not live in spite of ourselves, or without ourselves: the vital spark at first communicated to us without our own acting, is still fed and sustained by our own action. We take food and medicine, and wear clothes, and dwell in habitations, to preserve life; and we must manifest no less solicitude, and put forth no less effort, to secure the blessings of life. It depends very much upon every man's own choice and labour, how life turns out.

To spend life in happiness and usefulness, we must

prepare in the early stages of it for what is future. There is no truth in the Platonic notion of the pre-existence of human souls. We cannot in another and antecedent state anticipate our existence on earth, and go through a training in some previous world, and thus learn how to act our part here. Such an advantage, if indeed it would be an advantage, is denied us. We must come into life, and learn as we go on. We must by thoughtfulness, observation, and experience, pick up knowledge by the way. This wonderfully increases the peril of our situation, and the necessity for our cultivating and exercising habits of reflection and caution. Still though we cannot in a previous state of existence anticipate our dwelling and conduct upon earth, we may be trained for the subsequent stages of our being by the conduct we pursue in the earlier ones. We cannot first live to know how to live, but we can be educated for the future in the first part of life. Boyhood and youth are life, physically considered, as well as manhood and old age; but intellectually, morally, and socially considered, they are rather introductory to life, than life itself. I have therefore in this view of the subject, to consider the processes preparatory for future life.

I. First of all is education. I am aware that most of those who will read this work will have passed through their school days already. Yet this will not be the case with all, and the subject is so important that I must say a few things upon it. Education includes on the part of those by whom it is conducted, not only instruction, but the right application of knowledge to practical purposes; in other words, the

formation of character. This is beautifully expressed in the proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go." Not merely in what he should know, but in the way he should go. And this should ever be remembered by the pupil as well as the teacher. His mind is, of course, to be stored with knowledge, but his judgment, heart, will, and conscience, must also be trained to act rightly. The term of school education is of immense consequence to future life, and should, and does, lead all considerate parents most anxiously to look out for suitable persons to entrust with the education of their children, when they are no longer able themselves to educate them at home. But however judicious the selection of a teacher may be, all young persons should recollect that every one must, to a certain extent, be self-educated, and that it remains with themselves to determine whether the pains bestowed upon them shall be successful or fruitless. It is not in the power of man or woman, or of all men and women combined, to educate a young person, if he will not be educated, or if he does not determine to be well trained. The intellect is not a cup or bottle into which knowledge can be poured, whether the mind will receive it or not; nor is the heart a piece of passive clay which may be shaped at will by the teacher, irrespective of the will of the pupil. No; it depends upon yourselves whether you will be educated. And all your future life, for time and eternity, depends upon your education. "The child is father of the man," and education forms the child. What you are when you leave school, that you may

be expected to be through all your future life. Would that I could impress this upon all young persons: would that I could lead them, especially the older pupils, to look forward and to reflect that they have to pass through life, and that they are just entering upon it; and to consider with what measure of knowledge, and with what form of character, they wish to fill up their places in the great community!

II. Self-education must not stop, but be considered as having only just begun, when you leave school. You must still carry on your improvement by a thirst after knowledge, a habit of study, and a love of reading, thinking, and observing. Books must be your companions, and if they are good and useful ones, they will be your most profitable associates. In this wonderful age, when knowledge is so rapidly and extensively widening its boundaries; when science and the arts are ever astonishing us with new discoveries, inventions, triumphs, and wonders; when they are incorporating themselves with all the practical business of life; when to be ignorant is not only disgraceful to a man's intellectual reputation, but injurious to his temporal interests; when to have any weight in society he must know ten times as much as his grandfather knew before him; and when such facilities are afforded for mental improvement; no young man can be considered as preparing well for life who neglects the cultivation of his intellect. It is a love of knowledge, young men, not a love of pleasure, that will prepare you to act well your part in life. Understand and remember this.

III. The acquisition of a knowledge of some secular calling is another most important part of the preparatory processes of life. Most of you are intended for business, either in the way of manufacture, trade, or one of the professions, and are already for that purpose apprenticed or articled to some one who is to teach you your business, to some one who ought to feel himself bound by every principle of honour, justice, and religion, to instruct you in all you are sent to him to learn. And if the child be the father of the man, it is equally true that the apprentice is the father of the tradesman. What you are as to industry, application, and ability, now in your term of service and business education, that in all probability you will be as the future tradesman. Subordination is essentially necessary. We learn to command by first learning to obey. It is of immense consequence to remember this: a refractory, turbulent, disobedient apprentice or servant will most probably make a capricious, tyrannical, and ill-judging master. The apprentice whom his master cannot govern will be the master who cannot govern his apprentice. This is not simply one of the retributions of Providence, but one of the natural results of the course of things. The great principle which gave to the Jesuits such prodigious power in past ages, was unhesitating and unlimited obedience to their Superior. Heroes have usually been trained in the school of obedience and discipline. So our most thriving tradesmen, especially the men who have risen to a high situation, have first served well in a low one. But when I recommend submission and obedience, I mean that which springs from principle, and not

merely from compulsion and fear. In this, as well as in everything else, you should do that which is right to be done, because it is right. Call in your judgment, your conscience, your sense of propriety. It is just and good to obey the authority of a master. The principle of fear, the mere sense of compulsion will train you badly. The slaves of tyrants, who obey only from dread of punishment, upon their emancipation make the greatest tyrants. A character cast in the mould of fear must be a mis-shapen one. As to capacity for application, dispatch, sagacity, quickness, perseverance, in the situation of a master, you must get all these while learning your business as an apprentice. If not learned then, they never will be. An idle apprentice will make an idle tradesman; a pleasure-loving youth a pleasure-loving man. On the other hand a quick, sharp, clever boy, will make a quick, sharp, clever man. Tell me what the apprentice is, and I will tell you what the tradesman will be. Be diligent, be submissive, be honest, be attentive to business. Determine, by God's blessing, to excel. Aim to be eminent. Do not be contented with dull mediocrity. Have ambition to stand well and to rise high. A clever, industrious, successful, religious tradesman, is an ornament to his town and his country. Future life is before you, prepare for it thus.

IV. But the chief preparation for life, without which indeed no reliance can be placed on any other, is the formation of a moral and religious character. Having already reminded you how much the happiness and usefulness of life depend, even in this world, upon the formation of character generally viewed, I now

refer to religious character. Genuine religion, the parent of sound morality, (and no religion is genuine that does not produce morality) is the surest guide to success in this world; other things being equal, he will be almost certain to be the most successful tradesman who is the most consistent Christian. And as religion is the best guide to happiness in this world, it is the only way to happiness in the world to come. It has been a thousand times told you, on the authority of Holy Writ, that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is," mark that, "as well as of that which is to come." Who will contradict it? Religion will preserve you from all the habits that tend to poverty and misery, and aid the formation of all that tend to wealth and happiness. Have you ever studied, (for I would not so reflect upon you as to suppose you have never read,) Solomon's exquisite allegory, in which he so beautifully describes the nature and consequence of true religion? "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." Now the wisdom here so exquisitely described, and so forcibly recommended, is true religion. Who will rise up to say that religion ruined them? And how

many millions could rise up, some on earth, and some from hell, to say they were ruined for want of it?

If the formation of character is one of the preparatory processes of life, then you should not have your character to establish, your principles of action to choose, when you want them to use. Your rule should be laid down, your standard adjusted, your purpose formed, when you begin to act. You are about to set sail on the perilous ocean of life, not as a passenger merely, but as both captain and owner of the vessel; and should you not have learned navigation, and have prepared a chart, and a compass, and a sextant, and acquired practical skill to use them? There are rocks and shoals to be avoided, and storms and contrary winds to be encountered on your going out of port. Without fixed religious principles, and established moral character, you may be wrecked before clearing the harbour. It is of infinite consequence that you should possess the fear of God, a hatred of sin, and dread of judgment to come, before you embark. Remember therefore your Creator in the days of your youth. Set the Lord always before you. Be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. Be a young disciple, and then you are ready for everything. Religion will be your guide in perplexity, your shield in danger, your companion in solitude, your comfort in sorrow, your defence against temptation, and (if it be genuine, earnest, and consistent,) it will not fail to make you holy, happy, and useful.

V. There is another thing I would most earnestly enforce upon you as a preparation for life, and that is a deep sense of the importance of habits, and the ne-

cessity of forming good habits while young. Among the words of our vocabulary which you should select, as having greater importance than others, and as deserving to be more intently pondered upon, is habit. Dwell upon it; it is a golden word of incalculable value. It means the facility of doing a thing well, acquired by having done it frequently, together with a certain impulse or inclination to do it. It differs from instinct, not so much in exercise as in origin; habit being acquired, and instinct natural. I shall not trouble you with a discussion upon the philosophical theory of habit, but only advert to its importance. Consider then of what moment it is to do by habit what is right, and thus to have everything which is good and proper to be done made easy; not to have disinclination, difficulty, and awkwardness to encounter every time a right thing is to be done, but to go to it with the impulse and ease of habit; to be good, not only from principle, but from habit. On the other hand, how dreadful is it to be carried forward in the way of evil, by the double force of inclination and habit! Now childhood and youth are the time for forming habits. We see this in the mechanical arts, and it is so in all the mental and moral processes. Industry and self-denial, forethought and caution, religion and virtue, will all be comparatively easy to the man who has acquired the habit in early life. Through God's grace, the most difficult duty, the most rare virtue, may thus become easy.

And now let me enforce this preparation for future life upon you. Recollect what it is I am urging upon you. Ponder it well. Weigh it in the balance of

reason. It is preparation for life. What a sentence! how pregnant with meaning! Suppose you were going upon a voyage to a strange land, never to return to your own country. Would you not prepare both for the safety and comfort of the voyage, and also for your well-being in the country where you were going to dwell for the remainder of your existence; and would not everybody be astounded at you, if you were busy about a variety of things, and yet gave no care at all to the work of preparation for your voyage and your foreign residence? And what is your life but a voyage to eternity, a state requiring preparation both for itself and what lies beyond it? Now if in the former case you would be anxious to get a safe vessel; to select a skilful and agreeable captain; to choose a comfortable berth; to sail with pleasant companions; to lay in a good stock of necessary articles; and if you would commence the preparation in due time, that when the hour of embarkation arrives you might have nothing to do but to go on board, how much more necessary it is that now in youth you should be diligently preparing by and by to embark on the ocean of human life! And if in the case I have supposed you would be still more anxious about the foreign land in which you were going to dwell than even about the comfort of the voyage itself, how much more important it is that you should be more careful about that eternity to which this life leads, than the comfort of life itself!

Not only does life require a preparation, like everything else, but more than everything else. If every situation in life demands previous consideration, pro-

vision, and training, if every new scene or pursuit demands an adaptation, a meetness, a bracing up of the mind to it, how much more the whole of life. Who can do well anything that is novel, difficult, and important, without forethought, plan, and purpose? Who then can think of entering upon life without preparation, and stepping upon the stage of existence without learning to act well a part in the great drama? A life altogether unprepared for, must be a life of perpetual mistakes, faults, and miseries. A man cannot live happily, righteously, usefully, or successfully, who does not prepare to do so: that is, he cannot at all expect to do so, and ordinarily he does not do so.

You are to recollect, young men, that while the brute creation are prepared by instinct for their life, and without any previous education perform all the functions which are necessary to their well-being and to answer the ends of their creation, you can be prepared only by an education in which you must take a part. The bird constructs her nest, the spider her web, the bee her cell, and the beaver his house, by instinct, and they do their work as well and as perfectly the first time as the tenth. They are taught in no school, are apprenticed to no master; there is no preparation necessary for their life. He that gave it, gave all necessary preparation with it. But it is not so in your case. Instinct teaches you to eat, drink, and sleep, and perform other functions of the animal economy; but in all that pertains to art, science, literature, business, and religion; in short, in all that pertains to you as social, rational, moral, and immortal creatures, you must use your reason, under the gui-

dance, in some things, of revelation, and in all, in dependence upon the help and blessing of God. One of the purposes for which this reason is given you, and for which it ought to be exercised, is to prepare for life. It is to assist you of course in life, but it is also to prepare you for it. You must think, compare, choose, weigh evidence, and determine. You must prepare to live, by taking up and fixing in your mind in early youth certain great principles, which unquestionably will not grow and establish themselves there spontaneously. Such for instance as these: That in all things and in all events God is to be obeyed. That there is an essential distinction between sin and holiness, in all actions, thoughts, determinations, and feelings; and that sin, whatever temporal advantages or pleasures it may yield, is absolutely the most dreadful evil, and ought to be avoided. That nothing ought to be done which must be afterwards repented of. That judgment and conscience should always prevail over inclination. That no good is to be expected from anything without effort and labour. That you should never put off to futurity what can and ought to be done immediately. That what ought not to be done twice, should not be done once. That what should be done at all, should always be well done. And that the future should predominate over the present. Now reason dictates that all these maxims should be written in the soul as the preparation for life. And it is equally clear that reason dictates great caution in drawing practical conclusions, and forming determinations from mere impressions of fancy or feeling, or from any casual situations into which you may be

thrown. In other words, you must judge of principles, whether theoretical or practical, good or bad, not by adventitious circumstances, such as the persons by whom they are held, or the fascinating or repulsive manner with which they are set forth, but by themselves apart from all these things.

Remember that if God determines to continue you on the earth for any considerable length of time (as in all reasonable probability he does), life with all its situations, duties, trials, cares, difficulties, and responsibilities, will come, whether you are prepared for them or not. You are in life, and must go on in it. Childhood and youth must of necessity leave you in manhood. The time of your entering upon all the unknown solicitudes of man's condition on earth approaches. You must soon leave school, if you have not already; and come out of your apprenticeship, if you have not yet done so. You must soon be as that young tradesman who has entered upon the race of competition for a livelihood or wealth. You must soon plunge into the vortex of care and labour which is whirling him round on the rapid stream of human life, and its manifold business. All the perplexities which harass his mind must soon harass yours; all the temptations which assail his integrity must soon assail yours; and, prepared or unprepared, you must meet them. What! enter into that conflict unprepared by forethought, by knowledge, by principle, by habit! Alas! poor thoughtless youth, we pity you, and without the gift of prophecy, can foretell what terrible work you will make of life. Poor, defenceless, untaught

lamb, the wolves are before you, and what is to become of you!

That for which you are required to prepare, I repeat, is your whole life, not a particular situation; not a term of years however lengthened; not some contingent circumstance; but your whole existence upon earth. You may die in youth, it is true, and therefore I admonish you with all the persuasiveness in my power, to prepare by true piety for death, and nothing else will prepare you for it. Lest you should die young, I remind you that preparation for life is also preparation for death. Religion, which meetens you to perform well your part on earth, is your education, your training for heaven. True, your secular education, your knowledge of business, may seem, in the event of your early death, to be useless. But it is not so: the habits of submission, self-denial, and proper application of your mental powers, which were called forth even in secular things, under the influence of principle, all these go to the training of the soul for the higher state of her existence. But in all probability most of you will live, some forty, others fifty, others sixty, and some few of you will linger on to seventy or eighty years; and it is preparation for all this term that is now urged upon you. What a comprehension of scene, circumstance, and situation, does that term include! Imagine what may happen, must happen, in sixty or seventy years. Through what a variety of situations, temptations, difficulties, trials, changes, even if there be nothing at all extraordinary or out of the common course of man's history, you will be called to pass. And should not all these be prepared for? It

is impossible for you to foresee the designs of Providence in respect to you. I would not excite and influence your imagination to anything that is romantic; or set you upon building castles in the air; or lead you to leave off plodding, and in the exercise of an unauthorised ambition, seek by a leap or bound to reach an exalted situation, or by a stroke to grasp a large fortune. Still, it is impossible to conjecture what opportunity you may have given you to rise in life by patient and successful industry. In this happy country there is no chain of caste which binds a man down to the situation and circumstances of his birth. The very heights of social and commercial life are accessible to all, from whatever low level they may commence the ascent. He that laid the foundation of the greatness and wealth of the Arkwright family was a barber. Carey, one of the greatest linguists and missionaries of modern times, was a cobbler. Stephenson, the great engineer and the first constructor of railway engines, was an engine boy. No one knows what openings God may set before him in life, and should he not be prepared to take advantage of them? This very preparation, in many cases, makes the opening. Ignorance, idleness, and vice can never rise. They will ever sink by their own weight, and effectually close any door which Providence might set open before them. What a painful reflection it is for a man to make in future life, when some rare and golden opportunity presents itself for bettering his condition, "Alas! I cannot avail myself of it. I am disqualified. I made no preparation. With tolerable diligence at school, and during my apprenticeship, I could have

fitted myself for it; but my indolence then, and my folly and sin subsequently, have put it quite out of my power to seize the advantage thus offered me."

Consider again if any great mistake, as to the end and purpose of life, and the manner of spending it, should be made for want of due preparation, there is ordinarily no such thing as rectifying it. There is no going back and beginning again; no living life over again; no profiting by experience; no repetition of the opportunity for preparation. "The wheels of time are not constructed to roll backwards;" nor can the shadow retrograde on any man's dial. There is but one life and one death appointed to any man, and therefore only one opportunity to prepare for death, and only one to prepare for life. All depends on one cast of the die. How momentous that is! How does such an idea deserve to be pondered by every young man! What! only one life in this world, and only one in the next, to be prepared for, and that one neglected! Vain are the regrets and the wishes of the man, who, amidst broken fortunes, poverty, misery, and disconcerted schemes, has thus to reflect, and thus to reproach himself. "It is my own fault; I have no one to blame but myself. I was forewarned and admonished that life's duties, trials, and happiness, required preparation. Even from childhood I heard it. At school I was inattentive and idle. During my apprenticeship I loved pleasure rather than business. In youth I sought bad companions rather than good books. I neglected all mental culture, and I feared not God. I entered life without any preparation. I have succeeded in nothing, for I was fit for nothing.

My only chance is gone. I am prepared for neither world, and now I am miserable here, and must expect to be miserable hereafter."

How many whose history has verified all this painful self-reproach have we, who are older than you are, known! You are young, and have not yet seen much of life. We have. Take our testimony. We will not deceive you. We speak that which we know, and declare to you that which we have seen. We have watched the docile scholar, the diligent, industrious apprentice, and the pious youth, as he rose and ripened into the successful, holy, and happy tradesman and Christian, and thus became the joy of his parents, the ornament of his family, and the blessing of society. While, on the other hand, we have seen with grief those who in their boyhood and their youth manifested an idleness and a waywardness which no culture could instruct, and no discipline correct; who hated knowledge and despised reproof; who, in the spring time of life, sowed the seeds neither of piety nor of social excellence; who made no preparation for life, except it were for an unholy, unfortunate, and unhappy one; we have, I say, seen many such become their mothers' shame, their fathers' grief, the disgrace of their friends, the curse of society, and their own torment and dishonour. Both are common scenes; and you will exemplify one or other of them in your history.

Your own happiness, then, it is apparent, is deeply involved in this preparation. You are created to be happy. God wills your happiness, and has provided for it. You ought not to be indifferent to it. Your happiness is in your own hands. All the world can-

not, and God will not, make you happy, irrespective of your own conduct. Understand, at the outset of life, this great principle, that happiness arises more from disposition, character, and conduct, than from possessions ; from what we are, more than from what we have. Its springs, to a considerable extent, lie in your own nature. It is a beautiful saying of Holy Scripture, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." This deserves your attention, your study, your practical recollection. The happiness of life depends in a great measure upon youth. A bad boy seldom makes a happy man ; though God sometimes changes him, and calls him in manhood to an entire renovation. Suppose, for instance, young men, there were two kinds of seeds, one of which you must, by some necessity of nature or on compulsion, sow every spring, and on the fruit of which you must, by the same necessity, live every winter ; one fruit bitter and nauseous, and inflicting severe pain ; the other pleasant to the taste, and beneficial to the constitution ; would you not be very careful which you selected and sowed in your garden, knowing, as you would, what must be the inevitable result ? Why this is your condition of existence and your employment. You are always sowing in youth what you must always reap in manhood. But apart from its results, the very act of preparing for life is itself a part of the happiness of life. Diligence at school, attention to business, mental cultivation, true religion, and good habits, independently of the consequences they bring after them, are themselves the elements of enjoyment. Woe to the man who brings upon himself the pains and penalties of laziness.

An idle man is the most miserable of God's creatures, except him who, as is generally the case, adds vice to indolence. It is not however your own happiness and well-being alone that will be affected by your conduct and character, but the well-being of others. Your own individuality is something, yea, much to you, and you are not to be indifferent to it. God, by his own authority, protects you against yourself. He says, "Do thyself no harm." He will not allow you to be reckless of your own happiness. He has given you a capacity for bliss, and made provision for it, and accounts it an opposition to his beneficent designs, if you do not endeavour to be happy in His way, and according to His purpose. But then you are a social creature, born in society, intended for society, and bound to promote the well-being of society. Most of you will be husbands, fathers, masters, neighbours, citizens; and you ought to prepare to act your parts well in all those relations. You will contribute something to the well or ill being of the community. You will be the nettles, briars, and brambles of the land, or its oaks, myrtles, and fir trees; its strength or its weakness; its beauty or its deformity. Your country has claims upon you. You are therefore to prepare to serve it, and to serve it well. You should, by an intelligent and moral patriotism implanted early in your heart, seek to bless the land of your birth. Piety and sound morality are a nation's strength, more than its armies and navies; its wealth, more than its commerce; and its glory, more than its literature, science, and victories. Young men, you belong to the greatest nation upon earth; be worthy of your distinction.

Cherish more than a Roman's patriotism without a Roman's pride. Let Britain's present welfare and her future destiny be near your hearts. Let your youthful bosom swell with the noble ambition to do something for the land of your ancestors and your posterity. Add by your prayers a stone to her bulwarks, and by your personal excellence a ray to the glory that beams around her head.

But this is perhaps too large a scale on which to view your influence; too wide a circle in which to see yourself diffusing happiness or misery. Consider then the family relationships you will sustain. Look on and anticipate what kind of a husband, father, master, and tradesman, you are likely to make, and how you will preside over a domestic circle. You will determine some woman's destiny for life and the happiness of a family, perhaps a numerous one; and then upon their conduct will depend, by an onward succession, the destiny of others to descend from them. You will thus commence a dark or a bright line of human existence, which will run onward through all future generations, and be still going forward when the last trump shall sound. Misery or bliss, at the distance of centuries, or at the very antipodes, may be traced back to you. It is not therefore permitted you to be perfectly isolated and neutral. You are not to dwell in a hermitage or a monastery; or in a cave of the wilderness; or on some solitary mountain, where no eye will observe you, no ear will hear you; but amidst the busy and the crowded haunts of men, where influence to a greater or a smaller extent will go out from you, and you must be the salt or the poison of the earth.

You must, you do, mingle with others, whose lot is to a considerable extent mixed up with yours. Ought you not to think of this, and prepare for it? You are destined to light up the countenance of your fellow-creatures with smiles, or to suffuse their eyes with tears; to inflict wounds or to heal them; to "break the bruised reed," or to "bind up the broken heart." With what emphasis, therefore, may I now say to you, Prepare to live; society, futurity, your country, and the world, demand it of you.

But there is another reason, the last, the highest, and most momentous of all, why you should prepare to live, and that is, the life you lead in this world is the preparation for the life you are to live in the next. What the term and purpose of school pursuits, and an apprenticeship, are to the present life, that the whole of the present life is to the one beyond the grave. You are now, and ever will be on earth, in a state of pupilage for heaven and eternity. Upon your fugitive existence in this world hangs your everlasting existence in another. You are constructing a character, the form of which, whatever it be, is to last for ever. How momentous an idea! Yes, there is another world, an eternal world, a world of everlasting and ineffable happiness or woe. Yes, you are immortal beings. Immortality, the highest attribute of God, is yours also. In this as in other things, God made man in His own likeness. Before you lies the shoreless ocean of eternity. Look over the vast expanse. Every step you take in this world is to heaven or to hell. This prepares for all that lies beyond. Human life, this little span, this inch of time, our life, is all we have; the brief, the uncertain, the only preparation

time for those ever-rolling ages. Take this view of it, I beseech you. Meditate on the wondrous theme. Learn at the outset of life, and ever remember through all its future stages, that it is given to you as a discipline and probation for eternity. You have entered upon the trial; the awful probation is going on. Do not let the thoughtlessness of youth hide it from you. Do not let pleasure lead you to forget it. Do not permit companions to divert your attention from it. There it stands before you, the dread, the glorious, and grand reality of man's existence, Immortality. Look at it, and ponder it, I beseech you. Let it possess you, literally possess you. Feel as if you could not cast it out from your mind, as if you could not be dispossessed of the wondrous conception. Repel with indignation the attempt to lead you into an oblivion of this your noblest distinction, your richest birthright. Treat the man who would despoil you of the right consideration of this your highest dignity, as you would the thief that would rob you of your purse, or the assassin that would destroy your life. Prepare, then, by true religion, for that life which is in its turn to prepare you for Immortality.

To sum up all I have said, here you are, a rational, sinful, immortal, accountable creature, just about to start in the career of active life, with time and eternity before you, heaven above you, hell beneath you, dangers all round you, and many corruptions and imperfections within you. Does it become such a creature, in such a position, to make no preparation? Whether you think of it or not, two worlds, this and the next, are to be inhabited by you. What your lot may be in the present one, none but He who is om-

niscient can even conjecture. An impenetrable veil hides the future from your view, and not the smallest rent or opening suffers a single ray of light to reveal what is before you. Whether you shall die young or live to old age; whether you shall fail or succeed in business; whether you shall rise or sink in society; whether you shall wear out existence in sorrow or in joy; no one but God can tell, and he will not. Much will depend upon Him; but let me remind you, much will also depend upon yourself. Abandon the heathen notion of fate. I believe in Providence, but not in fate, and I admonish you to believe in it also, and by constant prayer to seek its blessing; but do not forget that Providence never blesses idleness, thoughtlessness, negligence, and extravagance. Providence helps those that help themselves. Everything, therefore, cries to you, "Prepare for life." Your teachers, your parents, your masters, your ministers, say to you, "Prepare to live." Your reason, your conscience, your weakness, your ignorance of the world, say to you, "Prepare to live." The prosperity of those who have succeeded, and the poverty of those who have failed, say, "Prepare to live." The duties, trials, difficulties, and dangers of earth, the joys of heaven, and the torments of the bottomless pit, say, "Prepare to live;" and above all, the great God who has given you existence, who is willing to help you to live holily, usefully, and happily, and who will call you into judgment for the manner in which life has been spent, says to you, "Prepare to live." Can you, dare you, will you, turn a deaf ear to voices so numerous, so solemn, so consentaneous?

CHAPTER II.

ENTRANCE UPON LIFE.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. PROVERBS iii., 6.

THIS passage of the Bible may be called the pole-star of human life, placed by the hand of God in the firmament of Scripture, for the eye of man to observe upon earth: and he that fixes his attention upon it, and steers his course by it across this troubled and dangerous ocean, shall enter at length the haven of everlasting peace. It is applicable to all persons and to all situations, but especially to those who are just entering upon the duties, dangers, and perplexities of man's terrestrial course. As a rule of conduct, it is brief, simple, intelligible, and unmistakeable, easily remembered, and delightful in its observance. If it does not assert, it implies the existence and operations of an all-comprehensive, all-wise, all-gracious Providence, which appoints, directs, and controls the affairs of men; a Providence which is not only general as guiding the destinies of nations and worlds, but particular and minute, as shaping the history of individuals. Some, who profess to believe in providential interposition in the great events of history, deny it in regard to the minute affairs of individuals. But who can tell what

in fact is great, and what is little, and how far great events are influenced by lesser ones? The destinies of nations have sometimes hung upon a thought. But we need not reason upon this, since Christ has asserted that "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without the knowledge of our Heavenly Father." Without this view, the doctrine of Providence might be grand as an object of contemplation, but it could yield little consolation as a subject of faith. Individual trust, prayer, hope, and praise, all rest upon the ground of individual Providence. It is not what God is to the universe at large, but what he is to me as an individual, that is the chief source of my comfort, and the strongest motive to do my duty. Now, the text proposes him to us as an oracle to which we may individually repair; and the injunction means that, really believing God by his Providence directs all things, we should consult Him by reading His holy word, where He has revealed His will; and that by sincere and earnest prayer we should seek his leave for everything, his direction in everything, his blessing upon everything, and his glory by everything we do. In short it means a devout and practical remembrance of God, as the disposer of all things, in all the varying circumstances and all the changeful situations of life; and it promises us his wise and gracious direction in all our affairs. How easy, how safe, how tranquil, how dignified a course of action! How vast the privilege of this access to an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, all-sufficient Friend, for advice, direction, and consolation! A wise and benevolent human

counsellor ever at hand is a blessing, how much more one that is Divine!

So much for the introduction of this chapter: I now come to its subject, entrance upon life: by which I mean that period of a young man's existence which follows his education and apprenticeship, when he usually leaves his father's house, and becomes a shopman, clerk, or journeyman; the intermediate stage between the youth and the man of business. Yet it may be remarked that the periods and situations intended to be described and distinguished as separate in the last chapter and this, run much into one another, and extend onward to settlement in life and the commencement of business.

This, young men, is the situation of the greater part of those whom I address; you are most of you not in business for yourselves, but looking forward to it; you are away from your parents, and have finally left home, and therefore are just stepping upon the stage of active life, and commencing your part in the great drama, with the scenes already shifting before and around you.

Let me then remind you a little more at large,

I. Of your actual situation. It is one of deep and pressing solicitude to your parents and other friends. They have parted from you, and sent you forth almost with the feeling and the fear that you were going as lambs among wolves. They know, for they have passed through them, the dangers of youth, and especially of youth away from home. If your good conduct and well-formed character at home have inspired them with confidence, their solicitude is somewhat abated;

but even then an anxious father will exclaim, "What if this fair blossom of parental hope, which grew so beautifully and looked so lovely when sheltered under the parental roof, should now be blighted when removed to the ungenial blasts of the world's temptations; the very possibility makes my heart bleed. Oh my son, my son!" How intensely aggravated is this painful solicitude if, unhappily, his child is going forth undecided in religion, unconverted to God, with no "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," to defend him from the assaults of temptation; and even if at home portents of future misconduct have showed themselves. "Oh," says the distressed father, "if the wholesome laws, the firm, yet mild restraint of parental authority and domestic order could not repress the outbreaks of youthful irregularity, what is to become of him when they are withdrawn, and he is left to the unchecked strength of his own corruptions, and the force of surrounding temptations? Oh, my son, my son." Young men, you cannot know all a father's and a mother's agonising solicitude for you, on your going out into the world; but you can conceive of it in part, by the scenes of that sorrowful hour when, amidst so many tears, your mother parted from you, and, with a voice half-choked, your father grasped your hand, and sobbed out, "Farewell, my boy. Behave yourself well, and comfort our hearts by your good conduct." How anxious are they to hear from you, and of you, to have their fears dissipated and their hopes confirmed. How eagerly, joyfully, and yet how tremblingly they open every letter to judge from its contents whether there

are any signs of incipient moral mischief in your character. Respect their feelings, reward their affection, relieve their solicitude. Call it not suspicion, jealousy, distrust. No, no; it is love trembling over its object, affection agonising for its loved one. Many an hour is that mother kept waking at midnight, thinking and praying for her son who has recently left her to enter upon the world's business; and often, amidst other cares, does that father feel it to be one of the greatest of them all, to consider how his boy conducts himself in his new situation. Let me plead then for the peace of those two hearts which throb so anxiously for you, and for the peace of which, so far as it is in your keeping, your own ought to throb responsively.

But I now turn from your parents, and remind you of the momentous and infinite importance of this period of your life to yourselves. It is in all probability the crisis of your history, the hinge of your destiny, the casting of your lot for both worlds, the formation of your character for time and for eternity. Through every hour, almost every minute, of this term, and in every scene, your character is passing from that state of fusion in which it was left by boyhood and youth, into the cold, hard solidity and fixedness of manhood. It depends chiefly upon the time that is now passing over you, what you are to be, and to do, through all time and eternity. The next two years will very likely determine the great question concerning the character of your whole existence. The observable tendencies of boyhood and youth, the significant prognostications from the pupil and the apprentice, the declaratory signs of earlier years, will now receive their

full and perhaps final confirmation. Your character, which has been growing, like your body, through the previous stages of existence, now, like that, arrives at the full shape and maturity which it will hereafter retain and exhibit. Can you be thoughtlessly and carelessly indifferent at such a crisis? Is it possible? Can you help saying, "Is it so, then? Am I really now, just at this period, becoming my permanent future self? Am I determining for all time, and for all eternity, what kind of moral, social, and intellectual being I am to be? Am I now casting my lot, forming my destiny, choosing my character? What thoughtfulness, seriousness, devotedness, and prayer for God's Holy Spirit to assist me, I ought to manifest! What do I wish to habitually be in and through all future life, and through all eternity? What I am now, that, in all probability, I shall be. I am entering upon life, and as I begin, so am I likely to continue." Yes, dwell upon that consideration. It is of immense importance to start well. He who at the beginning of his journey takes the wrong road, diverges at every step farther and farther from the right path; and though return is not impossible, yet at what an expense of time and comfort is it made! Take care, then, to begin well. Solomon says, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning;" especially if it be a good end of a bad beginning. But how rarely does a thing end well that begins ill? The fruit is better than the blossom; the reaping than the sowing; the victory than the battle; home than the journey to it; the reward than the service; but then all these better endings depend on good beginnings. There can be no rich fruit in autumn

without a good blossom in spring; no plentiful reaping without plentiful sowing; no victory without a well-fought battle; no returning home without a journey along the right road. So there can be no rational expectation of a good end without a good beginning of life.

II. I will now remind you of the dangers that attend your entering into life. Yes, dangers; and I really wish to excite your fears by the word. I am anxious to awaken your apprehension by thus ringing an alarm bell. Not indeed by raising spectres which have no real existence; not by calling up spirits from the vasty deep of a gloomy imagination. No, there is no need, in order to excite your fears, of passing before you the dark shadows and ghosts of romance. The sober and dread realities of daylight and of every-day existence are sufficiently numerous and appalling to justify the use of the most solemn, impressive, and earnest warnings I can give. Young men, it is a truth, and a dread and anxious one for you, that the moral dangers of life stand thickest around its entrance. The most perilous rocks and shoals in the voyage of life are at the mouth of the river, where it enters the ocean; and notwithstanding the lighthouse which, in the Holy Scriptures and the faithful labours of authors and preachers, ever holds out its friendly warning over these dangerous places, more shipwrecks are made there than anywhere else.

These dangers are so numerous that they must be classed. There are some which may have been thrown in your way, perhaps, by the injudicious conduct of your parents. They may have altogether neglected your moral training, and left you to go forth into the

world without any fixed principles, any good habits or a character anywise rightly formed. By a system of false and weak indulgence, they may have partially unfitted you for the trials, difficulties, roughness, and self-denial of life. I will not dwell upon their conduct with the severity it deserves; but be you aware of their mistake, and call upon your own wisdom to correct it. They have left you something to undo, as well as to do. Supply, by your own resolute will, the deficiency of hardihood with which they have left you. Abandon the soft and effeminate habits in which they have trained you, and determine to be men and to acquire manly characters. You can, if you will, make up their deficiencies; but it will require much effort and more perseverance.

There are next the dangers that are inherent in yourselves, and these are the greatest of all. You not only go to meet perils, you carry them forth with you. Now, at the head of all this class I must place the corruption of your own hearts. "Know thyself" was considered by the ancients a maxim so replete with wisdom as to have been taught by the gods. No man can properly exercise self-government without self-knowledge. False notions on this subject must, of necessity, lead to practical errors of the most momentous kind. I cannot, I dare not, I will not, flatter you by speaking highly of the native goodness, the moral dignity, of human nature. Scripture, observation, and experience combined, must prove to any impartial mind that man is in a lapsed condition, alien from God, and estranged from righteousness. This is a first principle, not only in all true religion, but in all sound philoso-

phy. Leaving out this, it is impossible satisfactorily to account for the present condition and general history of the human race. Forgetting or denying this, your whole system of religion and morals will be wrong, and your whole course of action defective and erroneous : you will not, can not know, the chief source of your danger, and that which alone can account for the existence and power of other dangers : nor will you know how to begin or proceed in watching and guarding against them. There is, you know it, you feel it, and perhaps some of you lament it, a fatal propensity to evil, which, though inclining to what is wrong, yet, as by divine grace it may be resisted and removed, is neither an irresistible tendency nor an invincible necessity, but a voluntary choice, and is therefore no excuse for actual sin, though it may account for it. It is not danger from without only you have to fear, but also from within ; not from others merely, but from yourself. You carry your tempter in your own heart ; you are your own tempter. You will be surrounded by external seductions, and you will expose to them a nature too willing to be seduced. There is in you "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." You have more need to be afraid of yourself than even of Satan or of the world. They cannot tempt you but through your own corruptions. Hence the imperative need of your seeking first of all the entire renovation of your own hearts, and keeping evermore a constant watch over yourselves. You will be most inadequately prepared to grapple with temptation, unless you know what it is that gives it force.

But the corruption of the heart assumes a different form in different persons, and shows itself in manners appropriate to their age, circumstances, and temptations. In your case there are those "youthful lusts," from which by apostolic injunction you are exhorted to flee. In addition to an inflammable and prurient imagination, the rashness and impetuosity of temper, the thoughtlessness and recklessness of disposition, the pride of independence, and the headstrong waywardness which are all too common in youth, there are the animal appetites and propensities exhibiting themselves in all their force: those promptings of licentiousness and impulses of sensuality, to which there are so many incentives, and which require so strong a restraint from reason and religion; I mean, young men, the vices which form the drunkard and the debauchee; those illicit gratifications which degrade the man into the brute. The danger here exceeds all the alarm I can possibly give. No warning can be too loud, no entreaties too importunate, in regard to this peril. Voices from the pulpit, from the hospital, from the hulks, from the workhouse, from the lunatic asylum, from the grave, and from the bottomless pit, all unite in saying, "Young men, beware of sensuality." Flee from this as from a serpent or a lion. Read what Solomon says, who could speak on such a subject from his own unhappy and dishonourable experience: "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood; sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell: let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

For she has cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Prov. v, 7. Read these chapters, and, in connection with them, Job xx, 11-14; 1 Cor. iv, 15-20; Thess. iv, 2-5; Heb. xiii, 4; Rev. xxi, 8.

There is also another form which the corruption of our nature assumes, and which the apostle calls "the deceitfulness of sin." "Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Deceitfulness is not only one of the characteristics of sin, but is its most dangerous one; and none are so much in danger of being imposed upon by it as the young; nor are they at any period of youth so much so as when just entering upon it. You have never perhaps looked upon it sufficiently in this view of it. You have dwelt upon its exceeding sinfulness, but its deceitfulness has escaped you. Yet this is what you have chiefly to guard against. Sin is a most cunning and artful foe. Observe what pains it takes to disguise itself, and conceal its hideous nature. It does not appear in its own proper and genuine dress, nor call itself by its own proper name. It puts the mask of virtue upon its face, and wraps itself in the cloak of dissimulation, by calling vices virtues, and virtues vices: thus excess and intemperance are called a social disposition and good fellowship; prodigality is liberality; pride and resentment are honour, spirit, and dignity; licentious levity is innocent liberty and cheerfulness; lying artifice is skill in business; sordid avarice is frugality. Virtue meets with the opposite treatment, and is always called by some disgusting or contemptible

name. True religion is sour puritanism, or hypocritical cant; tenderness of conscience is narrowness of mind; zeal for truth is bigotry. Now, my young friends, do not be imposed upon by such shallow artifices as these: recognise in such attempts a wicked and daring attempt to confound all moral distinctions, which must bring down the woe denounced against those "who call evil good, and good evil." Disdain this cajolery, this attempt to impose upon your understandings, by merely changing the names of things, while the things themselves remain the same. Consider that not only your moral but your intellectual nature is insulted by such a feeble effort to mislead it. Take it with you as a maxim of great importance to remember, that the generality of men are more governed by words and names than by things, and never more so than in questions of virtue or vice. Do you endeavour to be governed by things, and not by names.

And then, in tracing the deceitfulness of sin, mark the excuses it makes for itself; the insensible degrees by which it leads the sinner on in his course; at first tempting to little sins, thus preparing him for greater ones; at first urging only to single sins, afterwards soliciting a repetition of them; at first tempting in secret, soon emboldening him to sin openly; at first allowing him to sin in decent company, at length drawing him into the society of the notoriously wicked; at first allowing him to blush, then making him glory in his shame; at first leaving him content to sin himself, then prompting him on to tempt others; at first telling him that if he does not choose to go on, he can soon and easily retrace his steps; then cutting off his

retreat by involving him in such a complication of transgressions that he feels it almost necessary to go forward, adding sin to sin; at first telling him repentance is too early, because his sins have hitherto been so trivial; then suggesting it is too late, because they have been so great; at first assuring him God is too lenient to notice his beginnings of sin, then declaring that he is too just to forgive his crimes: thus by perpetual, though ever-varying delusions, leading him into, and keeping him in, the path of transgression. Such is the detestable nature of sin: it is a horrid practical lie; a deadly deceit; the greatest imposture in the universe; the most destructive fraud ever perpetrated in the world's history. And you, young men, are the selected victims of its wiles. The arch-deceiver is more intent on you than on any others. There the siren sits on the rocks of the sea which you are just entering, sending forth her dulcet but deadly strains, enrapturing you for your destruction; making you willing to be wrecked, and to die in her fatal arms.

Your inexperience endangers you. Life is an untrodden path. You are only just beginning to live; its difficulties, dangers, temptations, are all new to you. You are ignorant to a considerable extent of the machinations of Satan, the wiles of the world, and the devices of your own heart. You are ignorant of your own ignorance, and know not your own weakness and instability. You have hitherto been in some measure sheltered, in private; now you are to be exposed, in public. Forms of iniquity, of which hitherto you were happily ignorant, will rise up with fascinating appearances in your path. Scenes never

anticipated by you, and for which therefore you can make no special preparation, will open before you, and ere you are aware, draw you by their specious attractions into temptation. Assaults, sudden and altogether new, will be made upon your principles, almost before you can have time to buckle on your armour. And what will greatly increase the danger, is your own self-confidence, rashness and impetuosity. You give yourself credit for a degree of sagacity to detect, resolution to vanquish, and power to overcome evil, which you do not really possess. You rush in where others, possessing more knowledge, caution, and experience, would fear to tread; you advance boldly to a contest from which it would be your wisdom to retire; and you are ready to resent a suspicion of your being in danger as a disparagement of your strength of mind, purity of heart, and resoluteness of purpose. You are therefore likely to afford another proof and example that "he who leaneth to his own understanding, and trusteth to his own heart, is a fool." Show me a young man setting out in life with high notions of his own sagacity, virtue, resoluteness of will, and inflexibility of purpose, and there, without a prophet's inspiration, I can foretell, will be a sad illustration of the Scripture which declares that "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Then there are dangers from the corrupt state of society. With such hearts as yours, there is, in the best state of public morals, wickedness enough to constitute just ground for alarm and for watchfulness. It may not be that our country is worse than all others, or our time more profligate; I think they are

not; but it is enough to know that the aboundings of iniquity and the overflowings of ungodliness are such as to make all who have any regard for youthful purity afraid. The undoubted fact of the growing prevalence of infidelity in its most seductive forms; the multiplication, as by a fresh inspiration of the wisdom from beneath, of all kinds of sinful indulgence; the increasing desecration of the Sabbath; the endless new stimulants to worldly pleasure; the demoralised state of the public press; the new and ostentatious zeal and spread of Popery; all combine to load the moral atmosphere with the pestilence that walks in darkness, and to send forth the destruction that wastes at noonday. Never were there so many malign influences combining and conspiring against the religion and the virtue of our young men as now; and never was it more necessary for them to be aroused to a sense of their danger, and to be put upon their guard. Young men, the world is full of temptations; and its inhabitants are divided between the tempters and the tempted. Buckle on your armour, for you will need it; the helmet, the breastplate, the greaves, the shield. The enemies are lurking around, the ambush is laid, the aim is taken, the arrow is fitted to the string, the bow is bent. Beware: there are evil companions to be avoided. What says the Scripture, "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." I repeat what I have said, the workhouse, the lunatic asylum, the prison, the hulks, the convict ship, the gallows, the bottomless pit, all, all attest the truth of this, by the millions they have swallowed up in their jaws of destruction. Evil companionship has

ruined more characters, more fortunes, more bodies, and more souls, than almost anything else that could be mentioned. This is one of your first and most pressing dangers. It will meet you the very next day after you have entered into life. Man is a gregarious animal; he is made for society, and will have it, and the social instinct is strongest in youth. Beware, then, I implore you, to whom you give your company, and whose company you accept in return. You must take your character, to a certain extent, from your companions. Your companions will seek to stamp their image upon you, and that at a time of life when your mind is in a state to receive the impression; and if they did not, you would insensibly, perhaps designedly, copy it. As waters, however pure when they issue from the spring, take the colour of the soil through which they flow; as animals, transported from one region to another, lose something of their former habits, and degenerate by little and little; so character assimilates to that which surrounds it. You may be forced to have bad connections, bad acquaintances, for perhaps you cannot avoid them; but you need not, and for your soul's sake, and for the sake of every thing dear to you, do not, have bad companions. Men who scoff at religion; who ridicule the godly; who make light of sin and laugh at conscience; who are lewd in their actions, or obscene in their conversation; who are Sabbath-breakers; who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; who are extravagant in their habits and loose in their moral principles, these are the fools of whom Solomon

speaks, who will bring their own destruction upon you, if you do not avoid them.

With much the same emphasis do I warn you against bad books, the infidel and immoral publications of which such a turbid deluge is now flowing from the press, and depositing on the land a soil in which all seeds of evil grow with rank luxuriance. Infidelity and immorality have seized upon fiction and poetry, and are endeavouring to press into their service even the sciences and the arts. But besides these, books that inflame the imagination and corrupt the taste, that by their excitement unfit the mind for the sober realities of life, or that indispose it by everlasting laughter for what is grave, serious, and dignified, are all to be avoided. In some respects bad books are more mischievous than bad companions, since they are still more accessible, and more constantly with us; can be more secretly consulted, and lodge their poison more abidingly in the imagination, the intellect, and the heart. A bad book is a bad companion of the worst kind, and prepares for bad companions of all other kinds.

There are bad places also which endanger you, as well as bad companions and bad books, where, if you have not already formed bad companionships, you are sure to find them. All these are the avenues to ruin; the wide gates that enter into the way of destruction. Many who have been kept out of the way of these places at home, on entering life have indulged, in the first instance, rather a prurient curiosity than an inclination to sin, and have thought they would go once to them just to see what they are, and whether

there is all the harm that has been represented. Fatal curiosity! Oh, that once, that first wrong step, that slip off from the summit down the inclined plane! The door of evil was opened, never again to be closed. Never trust yourself even once in a place where you would not feel justified in going habitually. Never go even once where you are sure you would not be followed with the approbation of your father, your conscience, and your God, and from which you would not be willing to go immediately to the judgment seat of Christ. In illustration of the danger of a single visit to an anti-Christian scene of amusement, I may here repeat the fact, which I have given in another publication, of one of the primitive Christians, who for a long time resisted the importunities of a friend that invited him to witness the gladiatorial fights in the amphitheatre. At length he was subdued, but determined that he would sit with his eyes closed; and thus quiet his own conscience, while he yielded to the solicitations of his friend. An unusual shout of applause which followed some display of skill or courage excited his curiosity. He opened his eyes, he was interested, could not close them again, went again voluntarily, became a constant and eager attendant, abandoned Christianity, and died a pagan. How many more have been victims to one visit to forbidden places!

I mention also bad habits, habits of extravagance in the way of apparel, ornaments, and pleasure-taking. A love of gay personal appearance, and sensual gratification, leads to expense; and as extravagance must have resources, if honesty and industry cannot supply

them, dishonesty will create them. Be frugal, economical, prudent. Begin life with a determination to live within your income. Have no needless artificial want. Dispense with the cigar. Young men have often involved themselves in debt and consequent disgrace by this indulgence; besides it is costly in itself, excites an appetite for drinking, leads to evil company and evil places, and introduces other expenses and other habits.

Next I notice the love of pleasure. Here again is danger, imminent danger. Do you remember the words of Solomon on this subject? "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man." Never was there more occasion for sounding this in the ears of the public than now. Men were never more bent upon pleasure, and never had opportunities for enjoyment so much at command. It is a proof of human depravity that science and the arts never confer a benefit on society, but man's wickedness turns it into a means of sinning against God. What an incentive to Sabbath-breaking has the railway system proved! The sanctity of the Lord's day is in danger of being trampled down by the unholy foot of pleasure. Sunday excursion trains have become not only a snare and temptation to multitudes, but a source of annoyance to the quiet and godly inhabitants of several places on the lines of our railways. But it is not this only: invention is racked by those who cater for the public taste to find new pleasures, and fresh gratifications of sense and appetite. High and low, rich and poor, young and old, are all hungering and thirsting after pleasure, as if this world was given to us for no other purpose than to be a play-

ground for its inhabitants; the multitudes are rushing after it with the atheistical language which the apostle puts into the lips of those who deny the resurrection of the dead: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Young men, I do not wish to deny you pleasure, but only say, let it be intellectual and spiritual, rather than sensual; individual and private, rather than social and public; economical, rather than expensive; an occasional recreation, and not an habitual pursuit; and such as shall rather fit than disqualify you for the business of life. No man will less enjoy pleasure than he who lives for and upon it; and paradoxical as it may appear, it is true, the way to enjoy pleasure is not to indulge in it to excess, but ever to partake of it in moderation. Honey and other luscious sweets will do to taste, but not to live or feast upon. Cyprian beautifully remarks, that "the greatest pleasure is to have conquered pleasure." I repeat the impressive proverb, "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man;" for it is an expensive taste, which grows like every other, by indulgence. It will make you poor in youth, poor in manhood, poor in old age, with a poverty which no one will pity, or be forward to relieve.

III. I will now lay before you the state of mind which befits you in this critical juncture of your history. I deliberately select this phrase, critical juncture. It is, whether you think so or not, most critical; and something will be gained by this chapter, if it only brings you in sober seriousness to respond to the expression, and say, "Yes, I am now in the crisis of my temporal and eternal destiny, and I own it,

feel it, and will reflect upon it." Indeed this, I will confess, is my main object and my chief hope in this volume. I shall not touch upon controversy, as I have already intimated, nor is it my aim to suggest or supply topics of abstract thought or speculative inquiry; neither is it my purpose, if it were in my power, to gratify your curiosity by novelty, your imagination by taste, nor your love of controversy by logic. Time is too short, life too important, to be all spent upon such things. I have other purposes and aims: I want to make you seriously reflect upon your life and condition, your character and conduct, your present and future means and plans of action, usefulness, and happiness. I am ambitious to check the levity and thoughtlessness with which so many are entering upon the most momentous period of their existence; and without producing an unnatural gravity or gloom; and without extinguishing the joyousness, happiness, and buoyancy of youth, still to make you feel deeply how solemn and eventful is the period of entrance on life. Remember that as the power of reflection increases with your years, the habit of it should strengthen also; and that if it should have awakened solemn thoughtfulness to consider that you were about to enter life, it should excite no less apprehensiveness to consider that you have actually started in the eventful race. And this thoughtfulness should embrace some specific subjects, take some practical form and direction, and induce some active habits. Nothing can be less likely to be serviceable to you than a dreamy pensiveness, a moody and morbid fancy, and a disposition to speculate upon

possibilities, and to spend in imagining situations in life that time which should be employed in meeting your real condition. The thoughtfulness that I inculcate is not that which supplants action, but that which prepares for it, incites to it, and guides in safety through it.

I will now take up, and place before you, the only special direction which the apostle Paul lays down for the guidance of your conduct, "Young men exhort to be sober-minded." The very injunction supposes that this is a state of mind not only peculiarly necessary for young men, but in which they are usually deficient. Now, do not be alarmed at the expression, and "recoil from it as from something which should come only from, and is suitable only to, old time-worn people, whose feelings are dried up into a kind of cold and stiffened prudence, which they wish to have reputed as wisdom; persons who, having suffered the extinction of all vivacity in themselves, envy the young for possessing what they have lost. A dull, heavy, spiritless, formal, and calculating thing; almost mechanical in all pursuits and interest; the type of a person narrow in his notions, plodding in his operations, gloomy in his aspect, and placed wholly out of sympathy with every thing partaking of ardour, sensibility, adventure, and enthusiasm, and at the same time taking great credit to himself for all this. No, we may be quite sure that Paul's 'sober minded young men' were not to be examples of a sapient formality, of a creeping prudence, of extinguished passion, of a cold aversion to animated interest, in short, not examples of the negation of every thing

that is really graceful and excellent in youth." * What then did he mean? What is sobriety of mind? The predominance of true religion and sound reason over vice and folly, temper and fancy, imagination and passion, absurdity and extravagance. It is in short the mastery of the imagination by the judgment. Imagination, in the minority of reason, is the regent of the soul. Almost everything is looked at, judged of, and ruled by, this miscalculating faculty, and is rendered much more dangerous by the ardour of passion. Things thus seen through a wrong medium are distorted and discoloured. Evils and dangers which are seen by other eyes in all their magnitude of mischief, appear to the young, (if indeed they appear at all,) reduced to almost invisible spots; while little matters of real or supposed good, are magnified out of all proportion, and adorned with the brightest hues with which fancy can invest them. Hope, untutored and unchecked by knowledge of the world and experience, is ever building castles in the air, and treating as certainties what others perceive to be improbabilities. Sobriety of mind is reason, arrived at its majority and sanctified by religion, ascending the throne of the soul to take the sceptre out of the hand of imagination. It means the capacity of forming a right estimate of things as they really are. This, young men, is what you need, but of which persons of your age are often lamentably destitute. But I will select one or two subjects which sobriety of mind will especially bring under consideration, and of which it will lead you to form correct ideas.

* Foster's Lecture upon Sober-Mindedness.

It will, above all things, lead you to a serious and devout consideration of the supreme end of life. I say the supreme, the chief end of human existence; since there are many subordinate ones arising out of our numerous and complex relations. Pause and ponder this question then, "What is the supreme end of existence?" Mark well the subject; it is not what are all the ends of existence, but what is the supreme one, life's great business, the one thing needful; which being accomplished, whatever else we have missed, we still have not lived in vain; but not having secured which, we have lived in vain, whatever else we have gained. What I say, is your errand, your object? Surely, surely, if anything be worthy the attention of a living, rational creature, it must be the object of life; and if at any time, at the beginning of life. Proceed not another hour, take up no plan, no purpose, no pursuit, till you have settled the question, "What is the supreme end of life?" Whatever it be, it must combine all the following characteristics; it must be something lawful, which God and your conscience approve; something appropriate to your character and circumstances, and to all the changing scenes of life; something attainable; something worthy of your nature; something adapted to satisfy the desires of an immortal mind, and make you contented and happy; something which shall rather aid than hinder you in accomplishing all the subordinate ends of existence; something which shall combine your present with your everlasting destiny; something in short, which God himself has fixed upon and proposed to you, as his supreme end in your creation.

Is not this true? Must not the great end possess all these characteristics? Answer me. Must it not? And what, I ask, can do this but true religion? And it does so. Here then is the great end of life, that religion which leads to the salvation of the immortal soul, to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. "Compared with this, the objects of earthly ambition, which engage the attention and engross the affections of many in public life, are all vain, empty and unprofitable. The eager strifes and ephemeral victories of political leaders, the feverish dreams of the wealthy capitalist and the commercial adventurer, seem little better than toys and baubles. The sportive swarms of insects, floating in the sunbeams of a summer evening, appear to be a fit emblem of our vast cities and their busy crowds." Believe then that the only supreme end worth living for, is an end which shall endure, an end which can never perish. Do not squander so precious a boon as life upon secondary objects. Throw not away upon the perishing objects of an earthly ambition, your immortal soul, a jewel compared with which "the Mountain of Light," the richest trophy of our Oriental conquests, or any nobler product of the diamond mines, is a thing of nought.

Sobriety of mind will lead you also to consider the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the necessity of being always prepared to surrender the precious gift, which you can be only by having secured that which is of the highest importance. The man who has achieved the chief end, is prepared, at any moment, to give up in death all subordinate ends; while he who has sought only subordinate objects, is never ready to give them

up. He who has true piety, however young he may die, has effectually accomplished the chief purpose of his creation; while he who neglects religion, whatever of rank, wealth, honour, or even earthly usefulness, he may have acquired; and however long he may live to enjoy them, has missed the chief end of his being; and will very soon look on his life as a lost adventure. Equally true is it, that such a state of mind cannot be obtained otherwise than by the adoption of the principles necessary to secure the end of life; in other words true religion; a strong habitual faith in the Bible, in God, in Christ, in providence, in judgment, in heaven, and hell. Faith expresses itself not only in worship, in religious emotions, in zeal, in almsdeeds, but in enlightened and tender conscientiousness towards both God and man, and in a systematic and strong restraint upon the passions, fancy, temper, and appetites.

In entering then upon life, take religion with you. It will ensure you the protection of omnipotence, the guidance of omniscience, the companionship of omnipresence, and supplies from all-sufficiency. It will fill your intellect with the thoughts of God's own mind, and your soul with the joy of God's own heart; and thus furnish you at once with the highest truth, and the chief good. It will set before you the most perfect examples, and the strongest motives, to the practice of holiness and virtue. It will add the sanctity of the Christian to the virtue of the moral man, and mingle its own heavenly pleasures with the pure delights of earth. It will prepare you either for success or failure in business, and preserve you equally from the snares of prosperity and the withering blasts of adversity. It

will be your nurse in sickness, your companion in solitude, and your preserver amidst the corruptions of society. It will be your shield against temptations to sin, and the insidious attacks of infidelity and false philosophy. It will go with you across the sea, and dwell with you in a foreign land, if called by Providence to leave your native country, or make you honourable and useful members of the community, if you remain at home. It will be the guide of your youth, the protector of your matured life, and the prop of your old age. It will prepare you for early death, or for a multitude of years. It will smooth the pillow of death, by giving you immortal hopes amidst the dissolution of nature; will rise with you from the grave in that day when death shall be swallowed up in victory; and having put you in possession of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, will dwell in your soul for ever, as the chief element of your heavenly and everlasting felicity.

But still I would not forget that there are things on earth to be attended to as well as things in heaven: and religion, as I have already said, neither detaches you from them, nor unfits you for them; and next to this due regard to the claims of God, and as a part of it, industry and diligence in business are indispensable. Honesty to your employers requires this. You have contracted with them, for so much salary, to give them your time, the faculties of your mind, and the members and powers of your body. That man who does not serve his employer to the best of his ability is, to all intents and purposes, a thief, by stealing not his master's goods, but his time; and I would give nothing

for the moral principle of any one who defrauds his employer of this. It is not however merely in this light that I now speak of industry, but as your own safeguard: "For Satan finds some mischief still, for idle hands to do." Our idle days are his busy ones. An indolent young man invites temptation, and will soon become a prey to it. The diligent man is the protected man. Temptation comes and addresses him, but he is pre-occupied: he says, "I am too busy to attend to you." Indolence unmans the faculties, and impairs and debilitates the whole intellectual system. Be always employed one way or other. An idle man is the most miserable of all God's creatures: a contradiction in nature, where nothing is at rest. Among all other habits which you can form, the most valuable, next to religion, is a habit of activity. This must be acquired in youth, or never. Keep the ethereal fire of your soul alive and glowing by activity. Not only have occupation, but love it. Let your mind take a pleasure and a pride in its own activity. Nature, it is said, abhors a vacuum, and if nature does not, you should.

IV. Let me now lay before you a few opposite extremes which, in passing through life, it is necessary you should avoid: and with which, when just entering upon it, you should be intimately acquainted. Avoid then on the one hand a depressing solicitude, and on the other an utter carelessness and lethargic indifference about the future; a disposition to distress the mind by the question, "How am I to get on?" or the opposite extreme of a total destitution of all forethought or care about the matter. The former is not only a distrust of Providence, but it defeats its

own ends by wasting, in useless care, those energies of mind which should be employed in preparatory action; while the latter casts away that partial prescience which is given to us for wise and gracious purposes. Be hopeful, but not sanguine; moderate, but not indifferent. Let your expectations be sufficiently high to encourage exertion, but not so extravagant as to bewilder it.

Connected with this, and equally to be avoided, are inordinate ambition to rise in life, and the opposite extreme of that low and creeping satisfaction with things as they are, which is the result rather of an indolent and abject mind, than of a contented one. The determination by any and by all means to get on, and the lazy disposition to make no effort, are equally distant from moral excellence. Determine to do for your just advancement all that skill, industry, frugality, and honourable principle can accomplish, but nothing more. Set out in life thoroughly convinced of the truth of the apostolic declaration, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Young men, guard against this low, sordid, mischievous avarice, this coveting of wealth for its own sake; this determination to get it, if by fair means, well, if not, by foul means. Begin your career of honest and honourable industry, with the poet's impressive, sarcastic, aphorism before your eyes, "That loudest laugh of hell, the pride of dying rich." Guard against the

self-diffidence, distrust, and despondency, which would lead you to form too low an opinion of your own capability and resources, on the one hand; and on the other, against the complacent self-reliance, confidence, and conceit, which would lead you to think you can do everything. While you neither lean altogether upon your own understanding, nor trust implicitly to your own heart, remember they can both do something for you, and are both to be employed. Start upon the journey of life with the conviction that you can, by God's help and blessing, do something, yea, much, for yourself. Have faith in God first of all, and next to this, have faith in yourselves, as God-sustained. Enter into the apostle's words, "Through Christ strengthening me, I can do all things;" catch their spirit, and imitate their union of personal activity and confidence with dependance on divine help.

Take heed against flexibility of principle, purpose, and character, in reference to what is right, and obstinate perseverance in what is wrong. Be master of yourself. Have a will of your own, but be governed by your own convictions. Knowing what is right, do it, though you stand alone, and though the world laugh in a chorus. Possess that due degree of moral courage which, while it leaves you in possession of true shame when doing what is wrong, will extinguish all false shame in doing what is right. It is a noble sight to behold a young man stand with his back against the wall of truth, and with the shield of faith repel the arrows of a multitude of assailants. Be an oak, not an osier. Let it be seen that you can resist the force of persuasion, the influence of oratory, the ridicule of

the witty, the sarcasms of the scornful, the contagion of sympathy with the multitude. It is a great, good, and glorious thing, to be able in some circumstances to say "No," and to stand by it. On the other hand, it is no less great, good, and glorious to say, "I am wrong," when charged with an error, and convinced that you have committed it. An obstinate perseverance in a bad course, to avoid the shame and humiliation of confessing that you are wrong, is neither dignity nor greatness of mind, but stubborn imbecility, the obstinacy of a brute.

Avoid equally a total indifference to the good opinion of others, and a craving after admiration and applause. Seek to be approved rather than to be admired. Covet the esteem of the wise and the good; but do not hunger after the indiscriminate praise of any and every body. Rather seek to be excellent, than desire to be thought so. To wish to stand well with those whose praise is virtuous is lawful; but to be always anxious for the admiration of others is contemptible. The former is itself an exercise of virtue, the other is mere vanity. Guard against this vanity; it will make you far more solicitous about praise than principle, and willing to sacrifice the one for the other.

Avoid the extremes of credulity and suspicion in reference to mankind; of trusting every body, as if all were worthy of your confidence; and of trusting nobody, as if all were knaves. Be cautious whom you trust, but do not suppose that every one will betray you. It is well to be reserved, but not to be suspicious; to be prudent, but not misanthropic. On the other hand, as the danger of the young lies rather in being

too frank, open, and ingenuous, than too retiring and exclusive, study well the character of every one before you give him your confidence.

V. Perhaps I cannot do better than add to all I have said a few maxims, which may be considered as condensing some parts of the substance of this chapter, and which, as most easily remembered, may be of some service to you in your progress through life.

Your future history and character will be in a great measure of your own making; therefore pause and consider what you will make yourself.

What you would be in future, that begin to be at once; for the future is not at a great distance, but close at hand: the moment next to the present is the future, and the next action helps to make the future character.

While you consult your friends on every important step, (and this is at once your duty and your privilege,) rely less upon them, than upon yourself; and ever combine self-reliance with dependence upon God, whose assistance and blessing come to the help of a man's own industry.

If setting out in life in the possession of property, your dependence for success, after all, be less upon it, than upon industry. Industry creates capital, but beginning with capital has in many cases made a man careless and improvident, and destroyed his industry.

Consider the importance of the first wrong step. That first one leads to many others, and may be more easily avoided than any that follows it.

True religion (which means the habitual fear of God and sin), is your best friend for both worlds; multitudes owe their all to it; and multitudes more who

have been ruined by vice, folly, and extravagance, would have been saved from them all had they lived in the fear of God.

Those who would live without religion would not die without it; but to enjoy its comforts in death you must submit to its influence in life; and those who would have it in life should seek it in youth.

The perfection of human character consists of piety, prudence, and knowledge. Make that noble trio your own.

Whatever specious arguments infidelity may put forth in defence of itself, and whatever objections it may bring against Christianity, hold fast the Bible till the infidel can furnish you a more abundant evidence of truth, a better rule of life, a more copious source of consolation, a surer ground of hope, and a more certain and glorious prospect of immortality. And remember that spiritual religion is a better defence against the seductions of infidelity and false philosophy than the most powerful or subtle logic.

Enter upon life as you would wish to retire from it, and spend time on earth as you would wish to spend eternity in heaven.

I now leave the subject for your most devout and serious reflection. Entering upon life! How weighty the phrase, how momentous the consideration, how solemn the anticipation! A hundred millions perhaps, of your fellow-creatures are at this moment like you entering upon life. What an infinity of weal and woe is bound up in the history of that vast aggregate of human beings. But this, all this, is of less consequence to you than that one life on which you are entering.

For in the history of our world, in the convulsions of nations, in the revolutions of empires, in the stream of universal history, yea, in the chronicles of all other worlds than your own, there is less to affect your happiness, than in that one life which is before you. You are in life; you cannot go back; you must go on. Whether you shall exist or not is not left to your option, it is a question settled; you are in being, never, never to go out of it. What you have to determine is, (and oh! what is involved in the determination!) how existence shall be spent by you, and whether it shall be to you an infinite and eternal blessing, or an infinite and eternal curse. In view of such a career, let me, with an importunity which words are far too feeble to express, beseech you to take up the language of the passage at the head of this chapter, as the rule of your conduct: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

CHAPTER III.

INDECISION AS TO RELIGION.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him. 1 KINGS xix, 21.

THE scene to which this passage of the Jewish narrative refers is one of the most sublime and important to be found in the whole range of history, being no less than the great trial between true and false religion, in answer to the challenge of Elijah, which terminated so gloriously in the complete triumph of the former. A strange and almost incurable propensity to idolatry had ever been evinced by the Israelitish race, obviously springing from that depravity of their nature which made them long for deities congenial to their own corrupted taste. The spirituality and purity of the true God offended them. They could not be content with a religion of which faith was the great principle of action; but coveted objects of worship which could be presented to their senses, and which would be tolerant of their vices. Among the idol gods of antiquity, Baal sustained a distinguished place.* Such is the

* Baal was originally not a proper name, but a common noun equivalent to God, and employed to designate the true God: but when idolatry arose, it was applied to the various objects of false

power of example, especially when it falls in with our corrupt inclinations, that the Jews, notwithstanding the revelation they had received from God, and the care he took to preserve them from the abominations of the surrounding nations, often forsook the worship of Jehovah for idols, or attempted to incorporate idolatry with Judaism. The kingdom of the ten tribes was in this respect the most guilty. Ahab, one of the wickedest of their monarchs, had married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, by whom Baal was worshipped. Through the influence of this wicked woman, the worship of Baal was diffused to an enormous extent in the kingdom of Israel. Against this abomination the prophet Elijah,

worship. It is supposed by some that as the worship of the heavenly bodies was the first departure from the true religion, Baal was the representative of the sun. This was the God of the Phœnicians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and indeed of many other nations; by whom he was variously designated Baal or Bel, or latinised Belus. This deity, under another theory of his nature, was the Chronos of the Greeks, and the Saturn of the Latins. We do not find the name Baal in use east of Babylonia, but it was general west of it, to the very extremity of Europe. The worship of Bel, or Belinus, incorporated with Druidical rites, was general throughout the British Islands; and some of those rites and observances are still maintained amongst us, notwithstanding the establishment of Christianity through so many ages. A town in Perthshire is called Tilliebeltane, i.e., the rising-ground of the fire of Baal. In Ireland, Beltein is celebrated on the twenty-first of June, at the time of the solstice. A fire is kindled on the tops of the hills, and the members of families pass through it in order to secure good fortune for the year. Bel-tein is also observed in Lancashire. In North Wales a similar ceremony is practised on the first of November, when the people run through the fire and smoke, and each casts a stone into the fire. See Watson's Biblical Dictionary (and Hampson's Medii Ævi Kalendarium, vol. 1, p. 246.)

with the dauntless courage of a reformer, set himself in determined opposition. After reproving the monarch, and rousing against himself the malignity of Jezebel, who sought his destruction, he sent a challenge to Ahab, to put the claims of Baal and Jehovah to a fair and decisive test. In an evil hour for the credit of Baal the challenge was accepted: the decision was to be sought by each party preparing a sacrifice, and calling upon their God to answer by fire: and the scene of the contest was Mount Carmel. It was an august and awful spectacle; the question to be determined being to whom rightly belonged the throne of Deity. There on one side were Baal's priests arranged in troops, to the number of one hundred and fifty, patronized by the monarch and his wife, full of confidence, and flushed with hopes of victory. On the other appeared one man, to the eye of sense solitary, unbefriended, unpatronised, unprotected. But that solitary man was Elijah, the prophet of the Lord of Hosts. Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, assured of the triumph that awaited him, he surveyed the array of priests, the frown of Ahab, and the malignant eye of Jezebel flashing fury and revenge, calm and undismayed. What dignity was in his looks, and what majesty in his deportment! The congregated thousands of Jewish spectators witnessed in awful silence the preparations. Heaven with serene confidence, and hell with dread and dismay, watched a scene which, not only for that occasion, but for all time, was to decide whether Jehovah or Baal was the true God. How much was at stake; what interests were involved; what a question was to be

decided! One can imagine all nature was hushed in dread suspense; that the waves of the Mediterranean ceased to roll; that the winds of heaven were still; that the forests of Carmel were listening. The prophet towards the close of the day put an end to the suspense. Advancing to the assembled multitude of Israelites, he said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him. Ye are not yet in conviction quite alienated from the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; but your allegiance is shaken, and ye are divided in opinion and practice between Jehovah and Baal. Your irresolution is as guilty as your suspense must be painful; and your indecision is as uncomfortable as it is dishonourable and wicked. Ye worship Baal. I worship God. I am here to prove which has the rightful claim to your fealty and obedience. I now propose a trial upon which to rest the issue of the present contest. Let each party prepare a sacrifice, and call upon his God; and the God who answers by fire, let him be considered as the true God." You know the sequel;* and I drop the narrative, only turning back for one moment to dwell upon the indecision of the people: they halted between two opinions. You wonder at their indecision,

* Infidel wits have flippantly asked, "Where did the people get the water to fill the trenches at the command of the prophet, since the drought had caused all the water of the land to fail?" They forget, as they generally do, when they offer sceptical observations, the one main fact of the case, that the scene of the contest was not very far from the sea shore. [There has also been discovered on the spot assigned as the scene of the miracle a well which never fails. See Dean Stanley's Palestine.]

and condemn them with language of severest reprobation, and very justly so. But do you not in this also condemn yourself? Are you not undecided in a case which, if not so palpable to the senses, is no less plain to the judgment.

But before I describe the nature, and pronounce the character, of your indecision, let me set before you the opposing parties in reference to which it is maintained. On the one hand there is the Lord God of Hosts, the Jehovah of the Jews, under the fuller and clearer manifestation of himself as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; there are his ministers demanding the acknowledgment of his claims; and there is presented his service, the faith, hope, and love of the gospel. On the other side are the Baalim of this age, in all the various forms under which they are the objects of human idolatry. It is true you are not called, invited, or disposed, to bow the knee to idols of wood, stone, or metal, whether graven or molten, either in the rude images of barbarous worship, the grotesque and monstrous creations of Hindoo polytheism, or the fascinating forms of classic mythology. These however are not the only ways in which idolatry may be practised. What in fact, have ever been the objects of false worship but the evil qualities and passions of man's fallen nature, visible embodiment of his own lusts and pleasures exalted to the skies, to be there seen invested, as on Olympus of old, with all charms and splendours; or sent down to the infernal regions, to receive the stamp of their authority and malignity; that so they might come from either place with power to make men wicked. Every one has a god; and if a

man does not love and worship Jehovah, he will make a deity of his own image, and the deity cannot surpass himself. Survey, young men, the idols which you are called upon from many quarters to worship, and between which and the only living and true God, (O inconceivable folly and sin!) you are hesitating. Among them, sustaining a high place, is the idol of sensuality, "That reeling goddess with a zoneless waist," decked out with all that can pollute the imagination, inflame the passions, or excite the propensities of a youthful heart. Before this image multitudes of devotees of both sexes bow the knee, and offer the most costly sacrifices of property, health, principle, and reputation. Near her is the bewitching and smiling image of worldly pleasure, with the intoxication of music, songs, and dances; alluring the giddy and thoughtless to its orgies; and throwing the spell of its fascinations over the imagination of multitudes who go merrily to their ruin. Mammon, the sordid deity of wealth, is there, glittering with gold, and offering riches to his eager followers as the reward of their diligent and faithful adherence. His liturgy is the cry of "money, money, money;" his sacrifices, notwithstanding his large promises of happiness, are the time, the bodies, the souls, the principles, and the comfort of his worshippers; and his officials are the greedy speculators and commercial adventurers of our country and our age. There is also the Baal of infidel speculation, with false philosophy as his high priest to conduct the ceremonial, inviting the youthful aspirants after mental liberty to come into his service, by his promises to free the intellect from the shackles of superstition.

Near this is the shrine of human knowledge; evil only when raised into the place of faith, piety, and virtue; but when thus exalted above revelation, a deceiving, corrupting idol; the false Minerva of a Pantheon of vices. Nor must I leave out the idols of false religion, the chief of which is Popery, the anti-Christ of the Apocalypse, "the Man of Sin," described by the apostle as "sitting in the temple of God, exalting itself above all that is called God." This idol, taking the name of Christ as its designation; assuming the cross as its symbol; and boasting of an apostle as its first minister; enriched by wealth; venerable for antiquity; dignified by learning; decorated by sculpture, architecture, and painting; and adding the profoundest policy, and most serpentine craft, to all those other dangerous qualities, has fascinated countless millions: and notwithstanding the monstrous absurdity of its doctrines, the blood-stained page of its history, and its hostility to the liberties of mankind, is now putting forth the most arrogant claims, and making the most audacious attempts for the conquest of our country. Such are the principal idols which oppose themselves to the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, as the claimants of your heart. Such are the objects which have induced an indetermination in your minds whether you shall serve them or your Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor.

By the undecided in religion, I do not mean the confirmed infidel, profligate, or scoffer, or those who live in total and absolute rejection of religion. They are not undecided; they are in the fullest sense decided; they have made up their minds, though un-

happily on the wrong side. They have chosen their god, and are the determined and devoted worshippers of Baal; they have decided against God. They have hardened their hearts, seared their consciences, and perhaps outlived all misgivings upon the subject, except it be an occasional qualm in the season of death or sickness. They congratulate themselves upon their having thrown off all the weaknesses and fears of superstition, and upon their being now enabled to pursue their downward course unchecked by the restraint of conscience, unterrified by the spectres of imagination. Unhappy men, blind, and glorying in their blindness; benumbed in all their moral faculties, and exulting in the dreadful paralysis; with every tie cut that held them to piety and feeling, and accounting it a privilege that they are drifting unobstructed to destruction; determined to be lost, and rejoicing that nothing bars their path to perdition! The undecided man, generally, is the irresolute man, the man thinking of two things, but absolutely choosing, with full and practical purpose, neither; the double-minded man, or as the word is in the original, the two-souled man; the man who is like a light substance ever floating between two objects, carried by force of the tide now towards one, and then towards the other. This indecision is shewn by many with regard to religion. Perhaps the subject of indecision will be better understood if I consider its opposite, and show what is meant by decision. By decision in religion I do not mean merely the choice of a creed, or a decision between conflicting theories of religious opinion. This is all very well and proper, and to a certain extent

involved in the state of mind which I am recommending. A man ought not to be undecided in regard either to religious doctrine or ecclesiastical polity. It is incumbent upon him to make up his mind on the question at issue between the advocates and the opponents of secular establishments of religion; or between Unitarian or Trinitarian views of the Scripture; and so with other theological matters. These things are important, and his opinions should be formed and fixed upon the ground of satisfactory evidence; and his mind being once made up, he should hold fast what he believes to be truth, and not allow his convictions to be shaken by any sophistries and plausibilities brought against the views he had espoused. Religion, however, is something more than opinion, than ecclesiastical relationship, than ceremony; it is not only light, but life; its seat is not only in the head, but in the heart; it is a thing of the will, affections, and conscience, as well as of the intellect and memory. It is a deep conviction of guilt in the sight of God; an humbling sense of the corruption of our nature; true faith in Christ as the great atonement; peace through belief in the Gospel; supreme gratitude and love to God; a spiritual and heavenly mind; and a holy life. It is the mind of Christ; the image of God; His word laid up in the heart as the rule of the inward and outward life; a God-wrought, heaven-descended, eternally living thing. To be decided, then, is the intelligent, deliberate, voluntary, entire and habitual yielding up of ourselves, through faith in Christ, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to God; to enjoy His favour as the chief good, to make His will our

fixed supreme rule, and His glory the chief end of our existence. It is making God our supreme object; salvation our supreme business; eternity our supreme aim. Not talking about it, wishing it, intending it, but conscientiously doing it. A religious man says, "I have made up my mind, I am resolved, I am for God, for Christ, for eternity; my heart is fixed." To be undecided is to be in a state of hesitancy, irresolution, unfixedness. An undecided man is occasionally impressed, at other times in a state of total indifference. His judgment inclines to religion, and sometimes nearly draws his heart round. He goes out half-way to meet it; then turns back again. Now he looks towards true Christians as the happiest people; then he hankers after the company and amusements of the people of the world. He cannot quite give up religion, nor can he fully embrace it. He has occasional impressions and wishes, but no fixed deliberate choice.

In this hesitating, undecided, irresolute state of mind, very many are to be found. Yes, indecision is fearfully common; perhaps the most common state of mind among those whom I now address. Comparatively few are decidedly pious; still fewer I hope and believe decidedly infidel or immoral; the bulk are midway between the two, hesitating, halting, turning away from the one, but not turning to the other. How shall I account for this? It is not for the want of adequate information on the nature of the two claimants and the justice of their respective claims. You have all possible and necessary particulars of these in the Scriptures. You are not left to the dim twilight of nature, and the deductions of your own

weak and fallible reason. The sun of revelation has risen upon you in full-orbed splendour; and, walking amidst his noon-tide glory, you see on every hand the character and the claims of God. You know not only there is a God, but who and what he is. You are not destitute of natural ability, you are not hindered by Divine sovereignty, or by any invincible power of natural depravity; you cannot plead a want of time, means, and opportunity; you cannot justify and perpetuate this state of mind on the ground of difficulties in the Scriptures, or the inconsistencies of professors. Sometimes you feel inclined to plead these things, but the plea is soon given up. No, the causes subsidiary to the power of inward corruption are the following.

Many do not properly consider the necessity of decision, and the sin of hesitation. The subject has never seriously engaged their attention. Then it is high time it should. Begin now; God demands it, reason demands it, the importance of the matter demands it. On what is decision so necessary as on religion, which is the business of the soul, of salvation, of eternity?

Not a few are wanting in moral courage; they know what they ought to be and to do, but they have friends whose frown they dread, or companions from whose laugh they shrink. This is very common; and thus multitudes flee from the frown of man to take shelter under the frown of God; propitiate their friends by the sacrifice of their souls; throw away religion and salvation to escape from a jest; and make themselves the laughing stock of devils to avoid the ridicule of

fools. Young men, will you be jeered out of heaven and salvation? What, be turned from your eagle flight to immortality, by the ridicule of owls and bats!

In many cases, some one besetting sin keeps from decision. That one sin exerts an influence over the whole soul and all its purposes; benumbing its energies, beclouding its moral vision, bewildering its steps, and enfeebling its efforts. Such persons could give up all but that one sin; but that they cannot part from. How melancholy, how dreadful, to be willing to perish for that one sin! Rather than pluck out that right eye, or cut off that right hand, to suffer the loss of the whole body! How infinitely better and more noble would it be, by one mighty struggle, aided by Divine grace, to burst that chain, and decide for God! Consider well, if this is not the cause of indecision in your case, and if it is, perceive the necessity of your, resolutely and immediately, directing your most vigorous efforts to remove that hindrance. When you have mastered that mightiest of your spiritual foes, you may then hope that the greatest obstacle is surmounted; and that the subjugation of your other enemies will be a comparatively easy conquest. But till that is done, nothing will be done to purpose; and he that has been halting between two opinions, and wavering in his practice, will be halting and wavering still.

There are some who like Felix, have trembled, and dismissed the subject till a more convenient season. They give neither a direct negative, nor a direct affirmative, to the solicitations of judgment and conscience; but put them aside by saying, "I will think of it when I have opportunity, I am busy now." Here and

there one and another goes further still; they intend, actually intend, to be decided at some time or other. They forget the uncertainty of life; the frailty of human resolutions; the thousand incidents that are continually rising up to occupy and divert attention; the ever-increasing improbability of coming to a decision if the subject be postponed from the present moment; and above all, the demand of God for immediate decision. Now, is the accepted time: now, is the day of salvation. There is a world of importance in that seemingly insignificant word, Now. Millions have been ruined for both worlds by overlooking the momentous significance of the all-eventful Now. Rhetoric might be employed, sermons might be preached, volumes might be written, to enforce the import of that monosyllable, Now. Remember, "he that is now good will in all probability be better; he that is now bad will become worse; for there are three things that never stand still, vice, virtue, and time."

Perhaps as a hindrance to decision may be mentioned mistaken views of what is requisite to come to this state of mind. Two opposite errors are indulged: some persons throwing out of consideration the free agency of man, and others the sovereign grace of God. The former, supposing that man can do nothing, attempt nothing, but wait passively for the Spirit of God: the latter, on the contrary, believing that man is and does every thing in religion without God, never seek by prayer, nor expect by faith, the aid of the Divine Spirit. Both are wrong, and therefore both fail. In all things, both in nature and in grace, God's doings and man's doings go together. Man works and

God works. Man's efforts are not superseded by Divine grace, nor Divine grace superseded by man's efforts. This dualism which pervades all things, is especially conspicuous in the Bible, and has its culminating point in the conversion and sanctification of the human soul, as set forth in that wonderful passage: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Having stated the causes of indecision, I now go on to consider its characteristics. Is it not irrational? What is reason given us for but to examine all things that concern us; to weigh evidence; to discriminate between things that differ; to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. When man uses his faculties thus, he does what he was designed to do, and answers the end of his being. When he does not, but suffers himself to be swayed and bent different ways, and to float upon uncertainty, he forfeits the great prerogative, and most distinguished advantage, of his reasonable nature. The perfection of man is to be like God in his attributes, and, among others, in some measure in the glorious one of immutability in that which is good; but to be irresolute and undecided in this, is to live as much at random, and without aim, as if the breath of the Almighty were not in us. "Indeed, unless reason gives us a fixedness and constancy of action, it is so far from being the glory and privilege of our nature, that it is really its reproach, and makes us lower than the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding; for they, without that, act always regularly and constantly themselves, under the

guidance of instinct, a blind but sure principle." There are two things equi-distant from sound reason: to decide without evidence, and to remain undecided amidst abundant evidence. To be undecided in religion comes under the latter condemnation. The irrationality of indecision is also in proportion to the importance of the matter to be determined. Young men, I appeal to your understanding against this extreme folly. What? Is religion the only matter on which you will not make up your mind? Religion, which all nations have confessed by their rites, ceremonies, and creeds, to be man's supreme interest? Religion, which comes to you in God's name and asserting his claims? Religion, which affects your own well-being for both worlds? Religion, which relates to the soul and her salvation, eternity, and its unalterable states? Religion, the highest end of your existence, and the noblest effort of your reason? What! this the matter to be left in a state of unsettledness and hesitancy, when such means and opportunities are furnished for coming to a conclusion? When the Bible, with all its evidences, doctrines, promises, and precepts, is ever in your hand, and appealing to your intellect and heart, your will and conscience, and even your imagination? When the pulpit and the press are ever calling your attention to the subject, and aiding your inquiries? Undecided whether you shall be saved or lost for eternity? Whether you will answer or defeat the end of your existence? Whether you will run counter to God's design in bringing you into being, or fall in with his merciful purposes concerning you? Call you this reason? Talk not to me of the strength of your rea-

soning powers; boast not to me of your high intellectuality in pursuing literature, science, or the arts: I say, the man who remains undecided in religion, who has not settled this question (of God, the soul, salvation, and eternity) is, whatever stores of knowledge he may have acquired, or whatever opinion he may have formed of himself, a learned maniac, a philosophical lunatic, a scientific idiot.

I go further, and say that indecision in religion is contemptible. Whatever may constitute the beauty of character, decision is its power. There is something noble and attractive in the spectacle of an individual selecting some one worthy object of pursuit; concentrating upon it the resources and energies of his whole soul; holding it fast with a tenacity of grasp, and following it with a steadiness of pursuit, which the ridicule of some, the frowns of others, and the ignorant surmises of all, cannot relax; clinging the closer to it for opposition, gaining courage from defeat, and patience from delay. Where such decision is displayed in a bad cause, there is something terrifically grand about it. Hence some have fancied that Milton has in this way thrown too much majesty over the character of Satan. How despicable is indecision as contrasted with this. Foster, in his inimitable Essay on "Decision of Character," has set this forth in a very striking manner. "A man without decision of character can never be said to belong to himself; if he dared to say that he did, the puny force of some cause, about as powerful, you would have supposed, as a spider, may make a capture of the hapless boaster the next moment, and triumphantly exhibit the futility of the determi-

nations by which he was to have proved the independence of his understanding and his will. He belongs to whatever can seize him; and innumerable things do actually verify their claims on him, and arrest him as he tries to go along; as twigs and chips floating near the edge of a river are intercepted by every weed, and whirled in every little eddy. Having concluded on a design, he may pledge himself to accomplish it, if the hundred diversities of feeling which may come within the week will let him. As his character precludes all forethought of his conduct, he may sit and wonder what form and direction his views and actions are destined to take to-morrow; as a farmer has often to acknowledge that the next day's proceedings are at the disposal of winds and clouds." True as this is in reference to everything, it is most true in reference to religion. Never is indecision so contemptible as in reference to it; in such a career and in reference to such an object, to be the slave of accidents; the poor tame victim of every little incident that can arise; the prey of every insignificant yelping cur that can drive you hither and thither with his biteless bark! O shame, shame upon your understanding, to say nothing of your heart and conscience, when with such a subject as religion to consider and settle, you can allow not merely the most magnificent objects which the world can present, but innumerable contemptible and sinful littlenesses, to shake your resolution, to invalidate your purpose, and to keep you halting between two opinions? It is the last and lowest degree of despicableness for a man thinking about glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, to allow himself to be brought to a stand,

and made to hesitate and halt, by matters of insignificance. What would have been said of the man who in ancient times hesitated whether he should become a competitor for the Olympic crown, or for some paltry office in a Greek village? Or what judgment should we have formed of Columbus, if, when meditating the discovery of a new world, he hesitated whether to embark on the Atlantic, or to engage in picking up shells on its shores? But what are these instances of folly and littleness, compared with that of the man who halts between the infinite and eternal blessings of religion, and the pleasures, acquisitions, and possessions of this world?

Indecision in religion is uncomfortable. If reason is given us to decide upon modes of action, and if revelation furnishes us with rules of action in the matter of religion, it is most natural we should decide, and altogether unnatural that we should remain, for one hour, in a state of wavering and unsettledness. What is natural is easy, graceful and pleasant; and what is unnatural is always awkward and painful. The natural state for the mind to be in, is first inquiry, and then decision. No mind can be serene and peaceful in a state of suspense and incertitude. May I not appeal to universal experience for proof, that a man who is going alternately backwards and forwards; ever wavering in opinion; now determined one way and now another; now fixed in purpose, then unsettled and altering his plan; now resolute, now hesitating; and who has thus found no ground to rest upon, cannot be happy. This is true in reference to everything. A mind thus at odds with itself, even in little things, cannot but be

very uneasy; and he therefore who would consult his own comfort, should, by much self-discipline, endeavour to rid himself of this instability of action, this infirmity of purpose. I would not, young men, inculcate the opposite evil of inconsiderate and reckless conduct: a headlong course of action, begun without examination, and continued without reflection; and which, even when discovered to be wrong, is persevered in without alteration, merely for the sake of perseverance, and through unwillingness to confess a mistake. This is not rational decision, but blind impulse and unreflecting obstinacy. The decision I recommend is a habit of patient investigation, united with a capacity for weighing evidence, and followed by a prompt and resolute determination to do, and to do immediately and perseveringly, the thing which ought to be done. Acquire an ability to say in matters of right, I must, I can, I will. There is a wonderful potency in these three monosyllables. Adopt them as the rule of your conduct. But I am considering the unhappiness of indecision in regard to religion. I repeat the assertion already made in reference to other matters, the more important the subject is about which this indecision is maintained, the greater of course must be the uneasiness which it produces; and as religion is the most momentous of all subjects, so the uneasiness resulting from it must be the greatest. But even here the uneasiness also varies with circumstances. An amiable youth who has not fallen into vice, and has kept within the boundaries of virtue, but who yet has not given his heart to God, and made religion his supreme business, cannot have poignant remorse, as if

he had been guilty of profligacy; but even he is uncomfortable; he knows he is not a Christian, in the spiritual sense of the term. His conscience disturbs him; letters from home make him uneasy; awakening sermons alarm him; in the company of the pious he is not at home; his neglected Bible, given him perhaps by a mother's hand, reproaches him. He is not happy. How can he be in such circumstances? He resolves, breaks his resolution, and adds to his uneasiness the guilt of broken vows.

This indecision is sometimes attended with serious aberrations from the path of sanctity and regularity, though not perhaps of morality. In such cases, the mind of a youth whose heart is not hardened, is often in a state of still more painful disquietude and perturbation. It is an impressive truth, that ease of mind, quietness, or rather insensibility, of conscience, belongs often rather to the decidedly wicked, than to the undecidedly good; for the former may have hardened and stupified his conscience so far that it lets him alone; but he who sins and repents, and then sins again, in a continued circle, is sure to be followed in his miserable round with the reproaches of his memory and the lashes of his conscience. "His good fits are but the short intervals of his madness, which serve to let the madman into a knowledge of his own disease; whereas it would in some kinds of lunacy be much more for his satisfaction and content if he were mad always." O the misery of that man whose life is spent between sinning and repenting; between the promptings of conviction and the impulses of inclination; between the difficulty of forming resolutions,

and the guilty consciousness of breaking them; between hopes ever frustrated by disappointment, and fears ever realised by experience! Indecision is its own punishment.

This indecision is in the highest degree sinful. You can see this, clearly and impressively, with regard to the Israelites whom the prophet addressed on Mount Carmel. What a crime to hesitate for a moment between Baal and Jehovah, to be undetermined whether to serve that dumb idol, or the living and true God! You wonder at their stupidity; you are incensed at their impiety. You take sides instantly with the prophet against the people. His zeal is not too burning; his indignation is not too severe; his irony is not too cutting for the occasion. How horror-struck you would be to witness such senseless impiety. But how much less wicked, though of course far less gross and revolting, is your conduct, in hesitating whether you shall serve God or one of those idols of the mind, worldly pleasure, infidelity, covetousness, or sensuality? The idols of the heathen are, as I have said, but the vices of the human heart personified, embodied, and made perceptible to the senses. Human lusts and passions are the archetypes of them all; the one is the abstract, the other the concrete, form of the idol; and how much less guilty is it to bend the knee to an idol, than to bow the heart to a vice? Dwell upon God's divine glory, His infinite majesty, His ineffable excellence, His boundless, inconceivable beauty, and every attribute of His glorious nature. "To Him all angels cry aloud: the heavens and all the powers therein. To Him cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy,

Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! The glorious company of the apostles praise Him. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise Him. The noble army of martyrs praise Him. The holy church throughout the world doth acknowledge Him;" and there are you, a poor frail child of man, halting between two opinions, and hesitating whether you shall serve Him or Baal. O what an ineffable insult to God! Every christian on earth cries out Shame! Every angel in glory cries Shame! Every page of Scripture cries Shame! While God Himself, indignantly and awfully, completes the cry of reprobation, and says, "Be astonished, O heavens at this, and be ye horribly afraid." Consider then the crime against God which you are guilty of while undecided. He desires and demands your immediate surrender to his claims. Yield yourselves unto God at once, is His imperative injunction. To hesitate whether you will serve Him is to be undetermined whether you will be the friend or foe of God, the loyal subject of His government, or a traitor to His throne; whether you will love or hate Him, reverence or despise Him, dishonour or glorify Him. Every attribute of His nature makes indecision sinful, every gift of His hand aggravates the sin, every injunction of His word increases the aggravation.

Indecision is dangerous. The Israelites found it so; after hesitating and halting between two opinions, whatever slight transient impression was produced by the scenes of Mount Carmel, they went over to the wrong side, bowed the knee to Baal, and, as the punishment for their sin, were carried into captivity. Indecision on religion is a state of mind fraught with

most imminent peril; for when long persisted in, it generally ends in decision upon the wrong side. It gives time for the wicked and deceitful heart to collect and concentrate all its forces of evil; emboldens evil companions to ply their temptations with redoubled energy; encourages Satan to multiply his machinations; and to complete all, provokes God to say, "My spirit shall not always strive with man. He is tied to his idols, let him alone. Woe be unto him when I depart from him." Every hour's delay increases the peril, and exposes you to the danger of being left by God. But there is danger in another view of the case: you are entering life, and are exposed to all the hazards enumerated in the last chapter; and is indecision, I would ask, a state of mind in which to encounter the dread array? Is it in this halting and unsettled condition that you would meet the perils of your path? Why, it is like a soldier going into battle without having settled which army he shall side with, and which general he shall fight for. Even the decided youth, who has fully made up his mind on the great subject; who has put on the whole armour of God, and is defended at all points with right principles, good resolutions, pious habits, and well-formed character, even he finds it difficult sometimes to stand his ground against the mighty foes of truth, piety, and virtue. Even he who, grasping the sword of the Spirit, and opposing the shield of faith to the darts of his enemies, exclaims with heroic voice, "I am for God and religion," and who by his very decision and firmness drives back the assailants of his steadfastness, even he is often sorely tried. How then can the irresolute, the halting, the

vacillating, stand? What a mark is he for every foe! What a butt for every arrow! His indecision invites assault, and prepares him to become an easy prey to whomsoever will aim to capture him.

But this is not all. There is a danger of dying in this undecided state. Life is uncertain. Your breath is in your nostrils. A fever, an inflammation, an accident may come upon you any day, and leave no time for reflection, no opportunity for decision. Death often springs upon his prey like a tiger from the jungle upon the unwary traveller. Millions are surprised by the last enemy in an undecided state. They are shot through the heart, with the question upon their lips, "Shall I serve God or Baal;" and are hurried into the presence of the Eternal Judge himself to have it answered there. Dreadful, most dreadful! To meet God, and in and by his presence to have a full exposure of the guilt and folly of hesitating between his service and that of sin! What a question to come from the God of Glory to the poor, naked, trembling, and confounded soul, "Are God and Baal so nearly alike, that you should have halted between two opinions which you would serve?" Mark this, in God's view there is no such thing in reality as indecision; this word is used to express things not as they are, but as they appear. In fact there are, in point of religion, but two classes of men, the converted and unconverted. The undecided man belongs to the latter class no less than the infidel and the profligate; only he may not have gone to such an extent of actual sin, and may feel more the unhappiness of his situation, and the desirableness of changing it. But he has not made the choice of

God's service, and he will be dealt with as belonging to the class of those who are against him. Indecision is utterly inconsistent with the character of the godly, the terms of salvation, and the hopes of eternal happiness! God will not allow of neutrality, and considers every man who is not decided for him as decided against him, and will treat him as such. No matter that such a man feels the weight of sin's fetters, and the galling burden of its yoke: no matter that he sometimes feels a desire to escape from its bondage, and makes some feeble and occasional efforts to effect his emancipation; nothing will be of avail to his salvation, but an entire surrender of the heart to God, and a complete and voluntary yielding-up himself to his service, as the supreme business of life. There is no promise in all God's word to the unstable and wavering, no hope held out of his safety, no salvo provided for his conscience, no middle condition in which he can take his lot between the decidedly good and the decidedly bad.

And now what remains but that I call upon you to renounce your indecision, and in the language of intelligent, deliberate, and settled purpose, to say with Joshua: "Let others do what they will, as for me I will serve the Lord." Reject Baal, and surrender to God, without compromise and without delay. You cannot have two masters. You cannot have two Gods. You cannot harmonise sin and righteousness, nor reconcile a life of piety and a life of worldliness. You must be one thing or the other. Religion is nothing, if it is not the first and greatest thing. To be undecided in such a business is the most irrational state of mind in the whole range of mental conditions. Look

inward upon your own immaterial, immortal, wonderful spirit, craving after appropriate and adequate sources and means of happiness; the question is, whether you will satisfy or mock its insatiable cravings. Look up at the eternal God your Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, and the everlasting Paradise of ineffable delights he has prepared for them that love him: the question is, whether you will submit to his claims, enjoy his favour, bear his image, inhabit his high and holy place; or wither away for ever under banishment from his presence, and the effect of his curse. Look down into that abyss of woe which divine justice has made ready for those who serve not God: the question is, whether you will escape that awful retribution upon sin and unbelief, or endure its intolerable burden for ever and ever. Look onward to the ever-rolling ages of eternity; that interminable existence whose perspective no eye but the Omniscient One can reach: the question is, whether that endless being shall be to you an ocean of bliss or a gulf of torment and despair. Undecided on such questions? If such conduct is known in heaven, how must angels wonder at the folly of mortals hesitating whether they will inherit their bliss: if it be known in the abode of apostate spirits, how must those once dignified but now degraded beings marvel with uttermost astonishment, that sinful men in danger of their misery should hesitate about escaping from it. Infidels, scoffers, and men of profane minds, may scoff at these appeals to the awful realities of eternity: just as many a felon, who has expired at the drop, once made himself merry and seasoned his mirth with vulgar jokes about the gallows. Miserable wretch, he

found at last that execution was a dreadful reality, with which the most hardened ruffian could no longer trifle. I believe, and therefore speak, and by arguments no less weighty than those drawn from eternal realities, I conjure you to remain no longer undecided. But clearly understand and bear in recollection what it is I require. It is not, as I have said, merely the adoption of any particular set of religious opinions; nor merely joining any particular body of professing Christians; but repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and a character formed, and a life regulated, by the word of God. Every known sin must be abandoned, and every Christian virtue practised. Evil companions must be forsaken, and your associates be chosen from the godly and virtuous.

If there be loftiness and nobleness in decision of character, it is most lofty, most noble, when shown with regard to religion. You need not go for instances of this, and for the admiration which they are calculated to afford, to such examples as Foster brings before you in his inimitable essay, to examples selected from history, to Marius sitting amidst the ruins of Carthage, to Pizarro, to Richard III., to Cromwell: nor even to those drawn from the records of Scripture, to Daniel, and to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: or to those supplied by Christian martyrology, to John Huss and Jerome of Prague: or to those borrowed from the annals of philanthropy, to Howard, to Wilberforce, and Mrs Fry: these are all grand, impressive, beautiful, but they are not the only ones that may be cited; nor with whatever radiance (whether lurid or serene) they may be surrounded or emblazoned, are they those

which are the most appropriate for you to contemplate, or which, perhaps, will have the greatest weight with you. Look at that manly, pious, young man, who has left the shelter and protecting wing of his father's house and home, and is now placed in a Manchester warehouse, and surrounded by fifty or a hundred fellow-shopmen, among whom he finds not one to countenance him in the maintenance of his religious profession, and the greater part of whom select him, on account of his religion, as the object of their pity, their scorn, their hatred, or their contempt. Among them are infidels, who ply him with flippant and specious cavils against the Bible; pleasure takers, who use every effort to engage him in their Sunday parties and their polluting amusements; men of light morality, who assail his integrity; a few lovers of science and general knowledge, who endeavour to allure him from religion to philosophy. How fearful is his situation, and how perilous! For most it would be better to leave it, for how few can hold fast their integrity in such a situation! But there, he, this decided, this inflexible, this noble-minded youth, stands firm, unyielding, decided. He is neither ashamed nor afraid: he neither denies nor conceals his principles. At proper times, before some of these laughers, he bends his knees and prays; in presence of that jeering set, he opens his Bible and reads; from that pleasure-taking company he breaks off, amidst their scoffs, to go to the house of God. He bears the peltings of their pitiless storm of ridicule or rage, unruffled in temper, unmoved in principle, and only casts upon his persecutors a look of gentle pity, or utters a mild word of expostulation, or

silently presents the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He keeps the whole pack at bay by his firmness. A secret admiration is bestowed upon him by others, while even those who hate him most are often astonished at his inflexible resolution, and it may be that one and another at length say to him, "We must go with you, for we see God is with you." Talk of decision of character! There it is in all its force, beauty, and utility. I know of no case in God's world in which it is exemplified with more power than in that. It is a rich manifestation of Divine grace, by which alone it is maintained. It is a sight upon which angels may look down with delight, and in respect to which God is ever saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." It is not martyrdom literally, but it is so in spirit; and such a youth ranks with confessors, who bear witness for Christ amidst "cruel mockings." In persecuting times that noble youth would have died for religion upon the scaffold or at the stake. Young men, behold your pattern. This is the decision for which I call upon you; and I call upon you to copy it without procrastination. You ought not to delay any more than to deny to do so. Every moment's hesitation is a moment of rebellion. You have no more right to halt than you have to refuse. God's claim is upon you now, and your next business after reading this chapter, is to rise and yield yourselves to God. When Pyrrhus attempted to procrastinate, the Roman ambassador with whom he was treating drew a circle round him on the earth with his cane, and in the name of the Senate, demanded an answer before

he stepped across the line. I do the same: the place in which you read this chapter is a circle around you, and before you lay down the volume, in the name of God, I demand your answer, whether you will serve him or Baal.

Put me not off with the excuse that it is an important matter and requires deliberation. It is important, most momentous, and on that account requires instant decision. As to deliberation, what time do you require? A year? A month? A week? What! to determine whether you shall serve God or Baal? You have hesitated too long, and another moment's deliberation is too much. Excuse not procrastination by the allegation that it is God's work to change the heart. It is, but it is yours also. The spirit of God is striving with you while you read this. All the influences necessary for salvation are this moment submitted to the appropriation of your faith. Turn not away with the purpose and the promise of coming to a decision at some future time. Future time! Alas! there may be no future for you. Upon the present hour may be suspended your eternal destiny. The instant of your reading this may be the determining point, for to-morrow you may die, or be given up by God to hardness of heart. I press you therefore for immediate decision.

Oh! what a scene is now before you! How solemn and how momentous! In what transactions, amidst what spectators, with what results and consequences have you been engaged while perusing this chapter! Three worlds, heaven, earth, and hell, are at this moment feeling an interest in you, as if your eternal destiny hung upon the appeal now made to you.

Amidst the prayers of anxious parents; amidst the labours of earnest ministers; amidst the sympathies and solicitudes of the Church of Christ; and rising still higher, amidst the eager hopes of angels waiting to minister to your salvation, and the jealous fears and dread of demons no less eager for your destruction; and, above all, under the watchful notice of the glorious Redeemer waiting to receive you among his disciples, you have been urged to decide for God and religion, against everything that can be put in opposition to them. What shall be your decision? It is recorded of an American preacher that while he was once urging similar claims on his audience, and demanding who would be decided, he paused; a solemn silence ensued, which was at length broken by an individual who had been inclined to infidelity rising, and with strong emotion simply saying, I will. The point was that hour decided. From that moment he became a determined, consistent Christian. Young men, who will imitate this example, and say in the hearing of Him to whom the audible voice is unnecessary, "I will?" That monosyllable, uttered in sincerity, will go up to heaven and engage it in a chorus of praise over your decision; will go down to the bottomless pit and exasperate the host of darkness with the shame and rage of a new defeat; and go through eternity with you as the source of infinite delight. Let this then be your resolution, "I will."

CHAPTER IV.

AMIABILITY WITHOUT RELIGION.

Then Jesus beholding him, loved him. MARK x, 21.

THE narrative of which this forms a part, is thus given: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions."

The character of Christ, as delineated by the pen of the evangelists, is one of the brightest glories of revelation, and one of the many internal evidences of its divine origin. Even the infidel Rousseau confessed, that if the gospel were a fable, he that invented the

character of the Saviour must himself be greater than the hero of his tale. What a union, without confusion, of the human and the divine; what an exhibition of the awful and the amiable, of the stern and the tender; at one time denouncing with terrific vengeance the crimes of the Jews; at another, weeping over the approaching fulfilment of his own predictions; now casting out demons from the possessed, then taking little children in his arms; and just after, looking with deep and tender interest on a youth, amiable, but not decided to follow him. All this, and infinitely more than this, is exhibited in the character of our Lord. Young men, study this sublime, beautiful, and superhuman character, and say, if both this, and the book which contains it, must not be of God. Could such a pattern of matchless truth, purity, and benevolence, be the offspring of delusion, falsehood, and depravity, which it must have been if it be the production of imposture? To what page of uninspired history can infidelity direct you for anything which even remotely resembles it in greatness, goodness, and unearthliness?

I now advert to a single incident in the life of Christ, one of great instructiveness and interest to you. By consulting the chapter from which the fact is taken, you will find that a youth of rank, fortune, and office, came to Jesus with deep solicitude to know what he must do to obtain eternal life. The whole narrative shows that he was a moral and amiable young man, and also concerned about religion, but depending upon the merits of his own good doings for acceptance with God; and at the same time loving his wealth far more than was consistent with his high pretensions to

love to his neighbour, and concern about eternity. Believing that Christ was a teacher sent from God, he wished to know from Him whether there was anything more which he could do to strengthen the basis of his hopes, and to confirm his assurance of salvation. It is important to remark, and recollect, that in replying to him our Lord deals with him on his own grounds. Christ, in what He said, neither disclaims His own divinity, nor preached to him the doctrine of justification by works; but merely asked him how, with his views of the person he then spoke to, he could address him, and flatter him with a title which he knew in its absolute meaning belonged only to God. So also in telling him that, if he kept the commandments, with unsinning perfection from the beginning to the end of life, he would be justified on the ground of his own obedience, his divine Teacher did not mean to say that such a thing as unsinning obedience would be found in him or any one else; but that if it really could be found, it would justify the man who had it. Our Lord soon showed to him, by the test He applied to his judgment and conscience, that he was not so holy as he thought he was; for upon being commanded to go and sell his possessions and give to his neighbours, which, as he regarded Christ as a divine teacher sent from God he ought to have done, he "went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Thus proving that with all his professions of having kept the law, he loved his money more than he loved God or his neighbour, and that the world was even then his idol. We are not to suppose, from this injunction of our Lord, that no one can be a Christian who does not dispose of

the whole of his property in alms deeds. Christ laid down a general principle, the supreme love of the world and earnestness after salvation are incompatible with each other, and gave it such a special application and extent in this case as its peculiarity required.

Still, we are told that "when Jesus looked upon him He loved him." Love is a word of wide and comprehensive meaning; in some places signifying approval of and complacency in character; in others, expressing nothing more than general interest and good will. There are sometimes amiable features of character in those with whom we have to do that deeply interest us, although at the same time there is much in them that we condemn. This was the case before us. The human nature of Christ partook of all our sinless feelings and attachments. His bosom was susceptible of the emotions of friendship, and of all that is honourable and graceful in our nature. On this occasion there was something in the circumstances, character, and manners of this young man which attracted the heart of Jesus to him; his youthful appearance was so prepossessing; his manners so pleasing; his address so courteous; his language so respectful; his disposition so deferential and docile, that Jesus beholding him, loved him. He noticed, recognised, and approved all the good qualities he possessed; he was interested by his youth, combined as it was with some concern for religion; and he cherished benevolent wishes for his welfare, and a friendly willingness to do him good. This was all; his regard for what was holy, just, and good, prevented him from going further. His beneficent and

sympathetic nature could only lament, that so much seeming excellence should be tainted with that which rendered it of no worth in the sight of God, and of no avail to the young man's salvation.

You see what was the defect in this man; he possessed not the faith which overcomes the world. He wished to unite two things utterly irreconcileable, the love of God and the love of the world. He wanted to serve two masters, God and Mammon. It was not vice and profligacy that kept him from true religion here, and from heaven hereafter: it was the more decent and reputable sin of supreme attachment to things seen and temporal. He could give up many sins, but he could not give up his besetting sin, supreme regard to wealth. He could do many things, but he could not give up all to follow Christ. He could give up vice, but he could not deny himself and take up his cross. He had many good qualities, but he lacked that one thing which alone could give holiness to them all. If vice has slain its thousands, worldliness has slain its tens of thousands. Of all the false gods mentioned in the last chapter, the shrine of Mammon is most resorted to: it is from that temple the broadest and most beaten path to perdition will be found. In the crowd which press along that path are included, not only knaves, cheats, and men of dishonourable character of every kind, but men who follow whatsoever things are just, and honest, and true, and even whatsoever is lovely and of good report; who yet withal rise to no higher grade of moral excellence, and no more exalted character, than to be just and honourable worshippers of this sordid deity. Yes, even Mammon

can boast of devotees who, though they do not act from a principle of religion, yet scorn whatever is mean, dishonourable, and unjust. Consider the words of an inspired apostle, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and begin life remembering that in the broad road that leads to destruction there is a path for the lovers of the world, as well as for the lovers of vice.

Before I go on to take up and consider the subject of this chapter, there are a few remarks which I may with propriety make upon the case of this young man viewed in connection with our Lord's feelings towards him. How much concern may in some cases be felt about religion without the subject of that solicitude being truly religious! Here was some anxiety, earnestness, and inquiry; yet not true, intelligent, and scriptural religion, a character which is by no means uncommon. We sometimes see a tree in spring one mass of blossom, beautiful to the eye, and full of promise to its owner; and yet we afterwards see all that blossom drop without setting, and the tree stand in autumn a collection of branches and leaves without a single fruit. Alas! alas! how many young persons resemble such trees, and excite the hopes of parents, ministers, and others, by incipient appearances of religion, only to disappoint them! Do not add to the number of those promising but deceptive appearances, and the bitter disappointments which they inflict.

How much good and evil may be mixed up in the same character; requiring the most careful discrimination and the most impartial exercise of judgment! Here were lovely traits corrupted and spoiled by

others of an opposite quality. In heaven and hell there are no mixed characters, the former being inhabited by the purely good, and the latter by the entirely bad. No speck is on the bright and burnished surface of the former; not a spot of brightness relieves the black ground of the latter. On earth, however, we frequently meet with a blending of apparently good and really bad qualities. The fall of Adam, though it struck out from the heart all that is holy towards God, did not extinguish all that is amiable towards man. Lapsed humanity is not indeed as angelical as its ignorant or false flatterers would represent; but neither is it always as unlovely, diabolical, or brutal, as its injudicious detractors assert. If no plant of paradise grows in man's heart till planted there by grace, it has wild flowers of beauty and pleasant odour which relieve the dreariness of the wilderness "and waste their fragrance on the desert air." When this mixture exists let us recognise it, and neither allow the good to reconcile us to the evil, nor the evil to prejudice us against the good. It is very disingenuous to talk in superlatives, as though every man who is a sinner is a perfect villain.

The possession of some good qualities is no compensation for the want of others; nor any excuse whatever for the possession of bad ones. Nothing is more common than for men to try to set up a sort of compromise between religion and morality. Some imagine that attention to the duties of the latter will release them from obligations to the former, and the performance of their duty to man serve instead of what they owe to God; while others seem to think

the performance of religious duties will exonerate them from their obligations to truth, justice, and purity. As if duty could be compounded for, attention to one branch of it, especially if somewhat strict and rigid, is thought to be a compensation and atonement for the omission or violation of others. This will not do. It is a deceptive and destructive attempt. The word of God forbids the wicked compromise, and requires absolute perfection in the highest degree, in every particular, both in reference to religion and morality. It is one of the chief glories of the Bible, that it prescribes, requires, and aids the acquisition of a complete character; a character in which piety towards God and morality towards man, the elements of heavenly and earthly excellence, all that is true, and beautiful, and good, harmoniously combine. Our Lord would not accept this young man's morality in excuse for his want of true piety, nor his concern about the future world as an apology for his love to the present one.

We should not fail to own and even love general excellence wherever we find it, though it may not be in association with sanctifying grace. It is good in itself and useful to others, though it will not lead on its possessor to heaven. An amiable youth, who is his parents' comfort so far as general excellence is concerned, even though he may not be a partaker of true conversion to God, is not to be placed upon a level with a profligate prodigal. We must not say of any man, I hate him utterly, and abhor him in all respects, because he has no true holiness. Christ did not act thus towards this young ruler. He knew he was not holy, yet we see He loved him.

Whatever general excellence we may see in those with whom we have to do, and however we may admire and commend it, we should still point out their defects, and endeavour to lead them on to seek the supply of them. This especially applies to a want of religion associated with the possession of many excellences. We are all too apt to be thrown off our guard here, and to allow ourselves to think there must be piety where there is so much besides it that is lovely; or if not, that it could add but little to such excellence. It is to be recollected however that as long as these general good qualities are associated with an unrenewed and unsanctified nature, they are utterly destitute of that principle which only can make them truly virtuous, which alone can render them lovely in the sight of God, and which alone can connect them with salvation. No false tenderness to the feelings of such persons, no disposition to flatter them, no regard to the opinions of others, should lead us to conceal from them that we know they are destitute of what it is necessary they should possess in order to their salvation. How faithfully did our Lord say, "One thing thou lackest yet!" Our judgments in matters of morality and religion should be formed by, and follow that of God. The Bible is the standard, and God the judge, of true excellence. The conventional opinions of men on these subjects are often very different from those of God. He looks at the heart; while man oftentimes looks no further than the outward bearing. He looks at the state of the heart towards Himself; man too generally looks no further than the conduct towards society. In reference to many a lovely speci-

men of general excellence man would ask the question, "What can be wanting here?" God replies, "Religion." Man asks further, "What could religion add to this?" God answers, "The first of all duties and excellences, love to Me." Man still questions, "Would any one consign this to destruction?" God replies, "Is this what I demand for salvation; or is it that which constitutes meetness for heaven?"

It is important to remark the interest our divine Lord takes in the welfare of the young, and especially of young men. Nothing like what is said of Christ's disposition towards this young man is said of any other unconverted person in all the word of God. No other individual seems in the same way to have called forth the sensibilities of our Lord. That it was an exercise of His regard towards a particular individual is admitted; but it may well be imagined it was intended to be a type of His interest in a class, and that class is yours. Jesus looks from His throne of glory upon you, addresses Himself to you, is waiting for you, will receive you, and that with special complacency. Go to the book of Proverbs, and see how conspicuous a place you sustain in the attention of the writer.

But I go on now to discuss more particularly the subject of amiability combined with defects of character. By amiability I mean what in common discourse we call good nature, a kindliness of disposition, a willingness to oblige, sometimes united with a gentleness of manner, and a lovely frankness of conduct: that in fact which constitutes general loveliness of character. Now this, so beautiful in itself, may be, and often is, found in a character which is very de-

fective in reference to other important and necessary things.

I. There are several general views that may be taken of this defectiveness, which I will lay before you, before I come to that special case which is brought under review in the case of the young man in the gospel.

Many persons confound amiability with an easy nature. The two are very different: the former, as distinguished from the latter, means a kindliness of nature, and a disposition to accommodate and oblige, but under the regulation of a sound judgment. Real amiability is always watchful against the undue influence of others, and can resolutely refuse to comply with a request for anything improper in itself, however importunately solicited. It may, and often does, most firmly and even sternly say, "No." But an easy nature rarely can, or does. It has not the power to resist entreaty, but allows itself to be persuaded by almost every body, and to almost every thing. Such a disposition resembles an osier, which any one that pleases can bend in any direction, and which in fact bends of itself before the gentlest breeze. True amiability has eyes to see and examine, as well as ears to hear, an easy nature is quick of hearing, but stone-blind: amiability is self-moved and self-governed, an easy nature is a mere automaton, which others move and guide without any resistance of its own: amiability is a kind heart in association with a clear head, an easy nature has a heart, but no head. Such an easy disposition is a very dangerous one, and has led multitudes to their ruin. Never surrender yourselves

thus, even to your friends; for if you do, you may soon find yourselves in the hands of your enemies. He is not your friend who desires to be your master. Be a slave to no man. Never surrender your judgment; and instantly dismiss from your society the individual whom you suspect of imposing on good nature, and who takes you for a poor dupe that has neither opinion nor will of his own, but can be led to do anything by entreaty or coaxing. Acquire strength as well as beauty of character. Learn to say "No," as well as "Yes," and to abide by it.

Sometimes we see much amiability associated with much ignorance. There is much that is really very kind and obliging; much to conciliate affection, but very little to command respect. Hence the excellence that is in the character does not do the good it might, for want of talent or acquirement to give it weight. It is said with a sneer of such a person, "Very good, but very weak." I say, therefore, do not be an amiable fool, and obliging ignoramus, a mere kind simpleton; but cultivate your intellect, and let knowledge recommend virtue. In this respect, as well as in others, do not let "your good be evil spoken of."

It has not unfrequently occurred that amiability has unhappily been associated with infidelity and immorality. Perhaps more frequently with the latter than with the former. Speculative infidelity has a tendency to make men cold, hard, gloomy; it freezes the genial current of the soul, withers and starves benevolence, and petrifies the heart into selfishness. But dissipation and vice are often frank and vivacious, full of mirth and merriment. Modern refinement in demoralization

has selected a term of some attraction to describe a profligate, and he is said to be "gay." Colonel Gardiner, before his conversion, was called "The Happy Rake." Of all the characters on earth which are dangerous to you, and should be shunned by you, the amiable profligate is the one most to be dreaded. The man of kind disposition, insinuating address, polished manners, sparkling wit, and keen humour, but of bad principles or bad conduct, is the most seductive agent of the Wicked One for the ruin of youth. He has the fascination of the eye of the basilisk; he has the glossy and beautifully variegated skin of the serpent, concealing the fang and the venom; he is the golden chalice that contains the poisonous draught; or to reach the climax, he is Satan transformed, if not into an angel of light, into a personification of polished and attractive vice. Of such men beware.

II. I now more particularly refer to amiability without religion. I remark that young men may, and often do, possess many qualities which are lovely and interesting, while at the same time they are destitute of true piety. There may be a delicate sensibility, the heart may be susceptible, the imagination glowing, and the feelings alive to whatever is tender, pathetic, or heroic, and yet all the while there may be no sense of sin, no gratitude to Christ, no love of God, no delight in holiness, no aspirations after heaven. There may be natural genius, acquired knowledge, large information, their possessor may be able to argue logically, to discourse with ready conversational power, to the delight of friends and the admiration of strangers, and

yet one thing may be lacking, for there may be no knowledge of God, or of eternal life; and over that mind, which is so bright and so brilliant as regards the present world, may brood the darkness which involves it in the shadow of death. You will sometimes see a young man so eager in the pursuit of knowledge as to trim his lamp at midnight, and anticipate the dawn by his studies, till his eye waxes dim, his cheek grows pale, and the seeds of disease begin to spring up in his constitution, enfeebled by mental application: and yet he cares nothing for the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; there is one book he studies not, and that the best of books; and one science he cares not to know, and that the science of salvation. To such it was well said, "By what dexterity of irreligious caution did you precisely avoid every track where the idea of God would meet you, or elude that idea when it came? What must sound reason think of that mind which amidst millions of thoughts has wandered to all things under the sun, to all the permanent or vanishing appearances of creation, but never fixed his thoughts on the supreme reality, and never approached, like Moses, to see that great sight." There may be docility and meekness, gentleness of disposition, and the utmost general loveliness of character, and yet none of the humility of genuine religion, none of the true poverty of spirit, none of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, none of the mind that was in Jesus. There may be great sobriety of mind; all the passions may be under the restraints of reason; all the propensities may be ruled by the most entire self-government; yet there may not be the holy sobermindedness, which is

the subject of the apostle's exhortation, and which consists in keeping the great end of life in view, and adopting such principles as are connected with it. There may be in young people the assiduities of an active benevolence, a willing co-operation in schemes of usefulness for the benefit of the nation or the world, or of some particular class of objects of human compassion; much labour may be bestowed, much self-denial practised; and yet all this while there may be no working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. There may be honesty and trustworthiness as a servant, exemplary diligence and perseverance, and yet there may be no giving diligence to the great work of pleasing God, and no exercise of solicitude to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Yea, as in the case of the young man mentioned in the text, there may be some concern about religion, a regular attendance on the ordinances of the sanctuary, some occasional impressions and convictions; some transient concern about eternity; and yet there may be no entire giving up sin and the world; no complete surrender of the soul to Christ; no regeneration of heart; no faith in Christ; no holiness. The youth may know the truth, and not love it; he may hear the gospel, and not believe it; he may contemplate the scheme of redemption, and not avail himself of it; he may know something of the doctrine of the cross, and yet not appropriate it for the salvation of his soul; and he may speculate about the glory of the Saviour, and the suitableness of His character and work, and yet not embrace the Saviour and His righteousness as the ground of his everlasting hope. It is most impressive and affecting to consider

to what a list of general excellences, to what an assemblage of virtues, in the same character, the sad declaration must be sometimes added, "Yet there is one thing lacking." O! to look successively upon the varied forms of unsanctified moral beauty, as they pass before the searching eye of christian scrutiny, and to have to say to each as it goes by, "Yet lackest thou the one thing needful."

Any character, however otherwise excellent, if deficient of true religion is, viewing its possessor as an immortal creature, essentially and ruinously defective. And in what other light than an immortal creature can he be viewed, if we really include his whole being and his highest relation? I will suppose, then, the possession of many things, yea I will carry the idea as far as it can be carried, and will suppose the possession of everything except this one thing, true religion, and in the lack of that there is a chasm which all the rest cannot fill up, a deficiency they cannot supply. To say of a human being, a rational, sinful, and immortal creature, he had everything but religion, is as if we should say of a citizen, he has everything but patriotism; of a child he has everything but filial piety; of a husband, he has everything but conjugal affection. It is just that want for which no assemblage of acquirements and other excellences can be the smallest substitute or compensation. Collect a garland of beautiful flowers, and wreath them round the brow of a corpse, lovely even in death, and ask, "What is wanting here?" And the very silence answers, "Life." This is a just representation of the unsanctified excellences of a young person without religion. Look at this defect in various relations.

In relation to God. Other qualities may have no direct reference to him, but this has. It is what he demands. Some of those other things he leaves to your taste; but this he imposes upon your conscience. He demands your faith, your love, your submission, your devotedness; and yet you are content with excellences that have no reference whatever to your Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor! You can be content to smile upon your fellow-creatures, and be smiled upon by them, without ever asking, "Where is God, my Maker, that I may enjoy the light of his countenance and reflect it back in gratitude and love?" Is God then just that one Being whom you may leave out of all consideration and regard, and treat as least worthy of being acknowledged and thought of? Is God just that one friend whom it is quite a venial sin to banish from the mind, and who is to be no more regarded than if he were some idol in a temple in India? Is love to God just that one state of heart which can be best spared from the virtuous affections, and the absence of which is no defect? Shall you by civility, courtesy, good nature, seek to please and gratify every one besides, and not seek to please God by religion? Did it ever occur to you to ask, "How must I appear in the sight of God himself, with this one defect, a want of religion?" How hateful, and desperately wicked, in his sight, must that one defect make you appear. What must be his displeasure, that while you are the delight of your friends, giving and receiving pleasure, you neither maintain nor seek communion with him; and that he sees in you no sincere pouring out your soul in the way of fervent desires for his

illumination, his compassion, his forgiveness, his transforming operations: no earnest penitential pleading in the name of Christ for his favour: no solemn affectionate dedication of your whole being to his service; but instead of all this, mere general excellence, gaining you a good standing among your fellow-creatures, but having no more reference to him than if he did not exist. Ah! what a defect that one want must be in the sight of God!

View it now in reference to the Bible, the Book of God, and all the great subjects which it contains. It was to implant this one thing in your heart, that the Son of God became incarnate, and died upon the cross; that the Holy Spirit was poured out; that the Scriptures were written; that the law was given; that the psalmist was inspired to record his sorrows, confessions, aspirations, and devotions; that prophets uttered their predictions; that apostles penned their gospels and epistles. Heaven has opened and poured forth its splendours and its revelations: not to make you simply amiable, which you might have been without this series of communications from the invisible world; not merely to bestow a few general ornaments upon your character, leaving its substance unchanged, defective, and corrupt as it is; not merely to fit you to give pleasure in the circle of your earthly friends, while still alienated from God and holiness. Oh, no! The Bible, that wondrous book, that silent testimony for God and from him, was penned to bring you under the influence of vital experimental religion. And yet you are content with amiabilities, of which you might have been possessed, if that volume had never been written!

The Bible, God's Book, written by the inspiration of God's Spirit, containing God's thoughts, expressed in God's words, calls you then, not to mere general excellences, but to this one thing which you lack. Patriarchs, priests, prophets, apostles, martyrs, all say to you, "Yet lackest thou one thing." Every writer, every page of the holy book, repeats the admonition.

View this defect in reference to yourselves. All other things fall short of your faculties, your capacity, your wants, your desires. Amiability, intelligence, sprightliness, do not meet your case, you need something higher and better. You want religion, whether you desire it or not. You may to a considerable extent, be ignorant of your necessity in this respect, but it exists. Religion is the one thing which you not only lack, but need. It is not to be viewed as a thing which your Creator imposes upon you by a mere arbitrary appointment, as if he would exact, simply in assertion of his supremacy, and in requirement of homage from his creatures, something which in itself is foreign to the necessities of your nature. It is not a kind of tree of knowledge of good and evil, a simple test of obedience. No. By its intrinsic quality it so corresponds to your nature, that the possession of it is vital, and its rejection mortal, to your happiness. The spiritual principle of your soul occasions the absolute necessity that it should be raised into complacent communication with its Divine Original. It is as much constituted to need this communication, now and for ever, as the child is to receive the nourishment which Providence has provided in the breast of its mother; and it seems as rational to suppose the infant could be

satisfied and fed, and made to grow, by ornaments lavished upon it, while all sustenance was malignantly denied to it, as that a soul formed to enjoy God can be satisfied with any general excellences of character, while religion, which leads to the fountain of true happiness, is neglected by it. If the soul be not so exalted as to be placed in communion with God, it is degraded and prostrated to objects which cannot, by their nature, adequately meet, and fill, and bless its faculties. No matter what you are, or what you have, if you have not religion: for if you have not religion, you have not God, you are without God. And what can make up for that privation? Consider only one single view of your situation, that of the loneliness of a human soul without God. "All other things," says Foster, "are necessarily extraneous to the soul: they may communicate with it, but they are still separate and without it; an intermediate vacancy keeps them for ever asunder; so that till God, whose essence pervades all things, comes in and is apprehended and felt to be absolutely in the soul, the soul must be, in a sense, in an insuperable and eternal solitude." But when religion comes into the soul, then God comes to dwell in it, and thus "the interior, central loneliness, the solitude of the soul, is banished by a most perfectly intimate presence, which imparts the most affecting sense of society; a society, a communion, which imparts life and joy, and may continue in perpetuity." Happy is the man whose soul has this one thing which meets all its faculties, wants, and woes. What can other and lesser things do in time of sickness, of misfortune, of bereavement,

and of death? Will a sprightly disposition, a merry temper, a humorous fancy, or even a well-stored intellect, be of any service then? What will these things do in such circumstances? They may grow as flowers in the path of life, but will they bloom in the valley of the shadow of death? Infidelity, indeed, gives us one instance, and it has vaunted it as a proof that an unbeliever can die happy. I mean Hume, who in prospect of eternity, (which with his views presented nothing but the shadows of eternal night), could find no higher or better employment than playing at cards, reading novels, and cracking jokes upon Charon and his boat. Such levity ill comported with such anticipations; and was perhaps nothing better than the act of a timid boy going through a church-yard at night, 'whistling to keep his spirits up.' But view these endowments in reference to the day of judgment and the scenes to follow it. There is a day ordained, in which God will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment." What an awful, ineffable, inconceivable scene will the last day present, the judgment of the world, the close of time, the commencement of eternity, the opening of heaven and hell to receive their ever-abiding inmates! Imagine that day were come; that you heard the trumpet sound; that you saw the dead rising from their graves; the world in flames; the Judge descending; the great white throne in the air; the

nations gathered round the dread tribunal, waiting their doom. Conceive, if it be possible to grasp, to hold, to endure the conception, of your going up to the tribunal, to have your character scrutinized, and your doom pronounced, and when listening for the result, to hear only that dreadful sentence, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy amiability is of no avail here. Thy good nature, thy sprightly temper, thy varied intelligence, thy attractive amenity, have not the weight of a feather, are not the small dust of the balance in which thy character is determined. Thou hast lacked one thing, that one thing is everything here. Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." How, how would you endure that decision? It has been very strikingly observed, that "At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump, will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide upon his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and amidst the innumerable millions who surround him, he will mourn apart."

View this unsanctified amiability in relation to heaven. The loveliest of all dispositions, and the possession of the richest excellences, apart from faith in Christ, and the love of God, have no reference to that state, and constitute no meetness for it. Heaven is a holy place and state for a holy people, and "without holiness no man," whatever else he may have, "shall see the Lord." Will good temper, amenity of disposition, vivacity, wit, or humour by itself prepare the

soul for converse with God? Are these the things that meeten for the communion of holy angels and holy men in the presence of a holy God? At best such attainments are the flowers of an earthly soil, and not plants of paradise. How completely would the possessors of such qualities, without a holy heavenly taste and bias, find themselves out of their element in that region of which holiness is the pervading character, and which, while it attracts to itself all that is holy, rejects everything else!

I now address myself to three classes of young persons.*

I. To those who have some things generally lovely and excellent in their character, but are destitute of true religion; to you that have sweet dispositions, with good talents or acquired knowledge; or wit and humour with a vivacious temperament; or all these together, but have them, unsanctified by piety, unconsecrated to God, unemployed for Christ. Alas! alas! what a wilderness of blooming weeds of various forms and colours is here, but weeds still, only weeds; and as to any good influence upon your destiny in eternity, useless and vain; they will be no crown of amaranth for the glorified spirit in heaven and eternity; they form only a garland for the immortal soul on her way to perdition; they will not afford any, not even the smallest, relief under her miseries in that world of hopeless despair to which her want of religion must inevitably consign her. With a fidelity which my

* Some of the sentiments and expressions in this conclusion are borrowed from Dr. Watts's Sermon on the same text, entitled "A Hopeful Youth falling short of Heaven."

regard to truth, to God, and yourselves, alike require, I assure you, that no combination of amiable and attractive qualities with the want of religion, can by possibility save you from the perdition that awaits ungodly men. There is an infinite diversity both of kind and degree in the sins to be found in the characters and conduct of unrenewed and unsanctified men, from those that resemble the amiable youth in the text to the blaspheming infidel and the vicious profligate; and all will be dealt with by a rule of proportion, although all must be swept away together, the most beautiful weeds and the most noxious ones, with the besom of destruction; and however dissimilar and discordant while living and growing upon earth, they will be blended in one common mass of irrecoverable corruption. In merely human excellence, not springing from love to God, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, there is no imperishable principle; no germ of divine heavenly and immortal life; it is, the very best of it, but of the earth, earthy, must die in the soil from which it rises, and can never be transplanted to the paradise of God. I pity the noble or amiable natures which, neglecting to seek after divine grace, are ruined for ever by the want of religion. I pity the man of sweet temper without sanctifying grace; of solid judgment without sound piety; of lively imagination without living faith: of attractive manners but not himself attracted to the cross of Christ; of courtesy towards man but yet enmity towards God; a polished gentleman yet still an unconverted sinner; the admiration of his companions and yet an object of displeasure to his Creator. So much general excellence

infected by a deadly taint that corrupts it all! How at the last day will such persons be mortified, enraged, and tormented to see men preferred to themselves; whom when on earth they despised as undeserving of their notice, men of ignorant minds, clownish manners and rugged exteriors! Yes, but under all that outward repulsiveness were concealed the principles of true religion, repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and a holy life. Much that was amiable was wanting in them, but they had religious principle. To see them owned by the Judge, exalted to his throne and crowned with his glory; while unsanctified genius and irreligious amiability are rejected as base metal, how profoundly humiliating, how terribly exasperating, to those who will then be thrown aside by God as rubbish and refuse! And following these rejected youths of unsanctified amiability onward to their eternal state, what miserable spectacles do they present! You that were the life of every company into which you came, and whose absence was mourned as that of the charmer of the circle, will your gay fancy brighten the gloom of those regions of sorrow, or give an air of gladness to those doleful shades to which you and they will then be banished? Will you, by any of your present acquirements, be able to relieve yourselves or your companions from the torture produced by the recollection that it was those very arts of wit and humour, sometimes turned against religion, that helped you on to that place of punishment? Will sallies of wit, sportive jests, bursts of merriment, playful humour, beguile the dreadful round of the miseries of the lost soul, and make the wheels

of eternity move faster and lighter, as they did those of time? How will you, of soft and gentle nature, of amiable disposition, bear the banishment from the regions of peace and concord, the paradise of love, the habitation of all holy friendship; and imprisonment with demons and demon-like men to which you will be condemned? "How will your souls endure the madness and contention, the envy and spite, of wicked angels; you that delighted on earth in works of peace, what will you do when your tender dispositions shall be hourly ruffled by the uproar and confusion of those dark regions; and instead of the society of God and blessed spirits, ye shall be eternally vexed with the perverse tempers of your fellow-sinners, the sons of darkness? O that I could speak in melting language, or in the language of effectual terror, that I might by any means awaken your souls to jealousy and timely fear! That so many natural excellences as God has distributed among you might not be wasted in sin, abased to dishonour, and aggravate your everlasting misery."

I most earnestly exhort you to supply the defect to which this chapter has directed your attention, and admonish you to add to all that is amiable that which is holy; to all that is lovely in the sight of man that which is well-pleasing in the sight of God; to all that is earthly in the way of excellence, that which is heavenly, divine, and eternal. Bear in vivid recollection what it is you need; you have, or are supposed to have, attractive endowments of mind, heart, character, but you have no real spiritual religion. And will that religion, if you have it, interfere with any of

your other excellences? Will it displace them to make room for itself? Will it pull up all those flowers, and throw them away as inimical to its own nature and prejudicial to its growth? Nothing of the sort. Amiability is of like nature with religion; the former is loveliness in the sight of man, and the latter loveliness in the sight of God. When the grace of God enters the soul of man, what it finds beautiful it makes more beautiful. It comes not like the cold chills and dark shadows of evening or of winter to shut up the flowers, and hide their beauties, and nip their strength; but like the rising sun, to open their petals, to reveal their beauties, to brighten their colours, to draw forth their fragrance, and to invigorate their strength. Religion is itself the chief amiability, and the cherisher of all other kinds. Hence it is that holiness is spoken of as beauty.

II. There is another class I would briefly address. I mean those who are as defective in amiability as they are in religion. Alas! how many are there of this character, who have neither gentleness nor graciousness; who are possessed neither of the beauties of holiness, nor the attractions of kindness, godliness, or courtesy; but who are as unlovely as they are ungodly; and have scarcely any to take delight in them either in heaven or upon earth. Morose, ungentle, unaccommodating in their disposition, they are incapable of enjoying happiness, and unwilling to impart it. They have not even external and tinsel ornaments to compensate for the want of internal and substantial excellences. They are like flowers which have no beauty of colour to divert attention from their offensive odour;

like fruits which are as bitter to the taste as they are unsightly to the eye. Unhappy young men! See them at home; they are tyrannical, morose, selfish, domineering, the troublers of domestic peace, the constant causes of disquiet and disturbance. Even to their parents they are ungrateful, disrespectful, and wayward; unmelted by their mother's gentle influence, unsubdued by their father's mild authority, and unsoftened by the gentle fascination of their sisters' love. How often do they go still further in this want of amiability, and by adding immorality and profligacy to unloveliness, do much to break a mother's heart, and bring down a father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave! Ah! how many parricides and matricides walk our earth, whom no law but that of God can arrest, and no justice but that of heaven can punish! How many carry the heart of a savage under the name of a son, and the poison of asps under their tongues and in their tempers, and towards even their parents transvenom all emotions of filial piety into the wormwood and gall of intense hatred of those to whom they owe their existence! What an object of abhorrence must such a youth be to that divine Saviour who evinced towards the individual alluded to in this chapter his sensibility not only to the beauties of holiness, but to the loveliness of general excellence. Is there such a youth reading these pages? Go, young man, from this volume to your closet, your Bible, your knees, and your God, and implore that grace which has said, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree."

III. I address those who are in earnest after religion,

and who really possess its essential principles, but are somewhat deficient in the more lovely and ornamental beauties of the Christian character. This is not defective amiability merely, but defective religion. Observation convinces me that this is not a supposititious character. It ought not to exist, but it does. Religion, in itself the very type of all that is true, and good, and beautiful, should draw after it everything else that is beautiful. The supreme should command the subordinate loveliness, but it does not always. It must be sorrowfully admitted that a mind enlightened by the Spirit of God, a heart renewed by divine grace, a life regulated by Christian principle, are not always associated, in a proportionate degree, with the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, an amiable temper, and a courteous demeanour. We have sometimes seen a form of distinguished personal beauty disfigured by a want of cleanliness and by a slovenly attire. The exquisite symmetry could not be altogether concealed; but how much more attractive would it have appeared with other and more suitable accompaniments! So it is with character; there may be real beauty of holiness, but in sad and slovenly attire of temper. Changing the illustration, I may observe the brilliancy of the most valuable diamond may be hidden by earthly incrustations; the lustre of gold may be dimmed for want of polish; and the most majestic portrait be half covered with dust or mildew. So religion, which is more precious than rubies, more valuable than gold, and the very image of God in the soul of man, may have its worth and its excellence depreciated by infirmities of temper and an unamiable deportment. Religious young men, be amiable as well as pious: not

only your happiness, but your usefulness requires it. You know that vice has not unfrequently its attractions in the amiability with which it is associated, and that some are reconciled to it on that ground. It is equally true that religion may be associated with repulsive qualities, and that some may be driven from it by those partial deformities. Be it then your desire, your endeavour, your prayer, to unite the holy and the amiable; let the diamond, with its flashing hues, be thus seen in the most tasteful setting, and the gold in its brightest polish. Win your companions to piety by the attractive qualities with which it is combined in you. Make them feel that religion is not the frowning and spectral form they have been accustomed to consider it; a gloomy spirit that cannot smile; a vampire that sucks the life blood of joy from the soul of youth. On the contrary, let them see that it is angelical and not demoniacal in its nature; that with a seraph's sacred fervour it combines his sweetness, gentleness, and ineffable loveliness. It is this which while it will prepare you to pass through life, blessing and being blest, happy in yourself and diffusing happiness around you, will also prepare you for the immortal felicities of the celestial world. "It is this which, transferred to heaven, will kindle with new and immortal lustre, and will be set in that constellated firmament of living and eternal splendour. Of that brilliant world, that region where all things live, and shine, and flourish, and triumph for ever and ever, the glory, the excellence, is eminently the union of all that is holy and all that is lovely. There all are brethren, and all love, and are loved as brethren. All are

divinely amiable, and excellent friends. Every one possesses in absolute perfection the moral beauty that is loved, and the virtue which loves it. Every one, conscious of unmingled purity within, approves and loves himself for that divine image, which, in complete perfection, and with untainted resemblance, is enstamped upon his own character. Each in every view which he casts around him, beholds the same glory shining and brightening in the endless train of his companions; one in nature, but diversified without end in those forms and varieties of excellence by which the original and eternal Beauty delights to present itself to the virtuous universe. There, every one conscious of being entirely lovely and entirely loved, reciprocates the same love to that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, which fills the immeasurable regions of heaven. Out of this character grows a series, ever varying, ever improving, of all the possible communications of beneficence, fitted in every instance only to interchange and increase the happiness of all. In the sunshine of infinite complacency, the light of the new Jerusalem, the original source of all their own beauty, life, and joy, all these happy nations walk for ever, and transported with the life-giving influence, unite in one harmonious and eternal hymn to the great Author of all their excellences and all their enjoyments, Blessing and honour, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, be unto Him who sitteth on the throne, for ever and ever. Amen."

CHAPTER V.

PERPLEXITY OCCASIONED BY RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES.

What is Truth? JOHN xviii, 38.

SUCH was the momentous question which Pilate proposed to the illustrious and holy Martyr who then stood as a prisoner at his bar. It has been said there are two things in the Scripture account of this circumstance which surprise us, the silence of Christ, and the indifference of his judge: that Christ should not answer such a question, and that Pilate should not press it until he obtained an answer. One of these wonders is the cause of the other, and if you consider them in connection your astonishment will cease. The levity of the querist was the cause of the silence of the oracle. Truth, in awful majesty, though veiled and insulted, stood before him, and indignantly refused to unfold its secrets and its glories to one who discovered frivolity on such a subject. On his lips it was the question of idle curiosity, not of deep solicitude; it came from the surface, and not from the lowest depths of his heart. If Christ gratified his curiosity, well; but he did not think truth of sufficient importance to inquire after it a second time.

The conduct of Pilate to Jesus and of Jesus to Pilate is repeated every day. Multitudes, by a little

attention to religion and their Bibles, ask, "What is truth?" but it is in such a careless and undevout manner, that Jesus Christ leaves them to wander in their own dark and miserable conjectures. Hence so many prejudices; hence so many erroneous opinions in religion; hence so many dangerous delusions, in what is called the Christian world. Still there have been very many who in sober and solemn inquisitiveness have asked the question, "What is truth?" Myriads of human intellects of the highest order have engaged in the pursuit of this great object; and as regards scientific knowledge, have by demonstration and experiment echoed in unison, and with something of the rapture with which it was originally uttered, the eureka of Archimedes. But in reference to moral and religious truth, how multitudinous and how contradictory are the voices which answer the enquiry. If we may judge from the present state and aspect of Christendom, the day is far distant when, in answer to the question, all tongues shall proclaim one doctrine, and triumphantly reply, "This is truth." Hence the perplexities of many young persons at the outset of their religious life.

Many things, young men, will perplex you at the outset of a religious life, and tend to embarrass you in the early stages of your enquiry into this momentous subject. The mysterious nature of the whole subject of religion, so far as it relates to divine, heavenly, and eternal truths; the general neglect of it, to all practical and serious purpose, by the multitude around you; and the lukewarmness and inconsistency of many of those who make a profession of it; will all be apt

to produce an unfavourable impression upon your mind, to shake your resolutions, and render your steps hesitating and faltering. There is also another cause of perplexity; I mean the number of religious sects, the diversity of creeds, and the ceaseless and yet unsettled controversies which prevail throughout all Christendom. Bewildered by such diversity, and distracted by such contentions, you are ready to abandon the subject in hopeless despair of arriving at the truth. I sympathise with you, my young friends, in your difficulties, and this chapter is intended, by God's blessing, to extricate, relieve, and guide you, and if it do not remove the difficulty (for what can remove it?) may do something to lessen it.

I. I will state particularly what it is that perplexes you. I descend into the depths of your secret thoughts, and I find there some surprise that on such a subject as religion, especially after a revelation from God, there should be any controversy, or any room for controversy at all. You may be ready to suppose that all would be so plain as to preclude the possibility of diversity or mistake. But do men think alike on any other subject? Is there consentaneousness of opinion on any one topic that is sustained only by moral evidence? Was there ever a statute or law passed, (they are usually framed with the intention of excluding all difference of opinion,) about which lawyers cannot, as to some of its clauses, raise doubts and difficulties? Now, is not a written revelation from God, inasmuch as it relates to subjects foreign to ordinary matters, remote from our senses, and out of the usual track of our thoughts, just that one thing about which

beyond all others, diversity of opinion might be expected? Consider the thousands of propositions contained in the Bible; the imperfections of language; the mysteriousness of the subjects; the endlessly diversified temperaments of human minds, and the various circumstances in which those minds are placed; and you will see at once that nothing short of an astounding and constant miracle could produce absolute uniformity of opinion. Nor is this all; for such is the corruption of man's heart, that his mind is not only on this ground likely to go wrong in its judgments, but it is actually opposed, with very strong dislike, to many of the truths revealed, and on that account it really wishes and attempts to pervert them, as being too humbling for his pride, too pure for his depravity, and too authoritative for his love of independence. Here again you may see reason to abate your surprise at the diversity of opinion.

The young enquirer about religion is not unfrequently scandalised and disgusted by the bitterness of sectarianism, and the rancour with which controversy is conducted. He sees the evil passions of our corrupt nature, "malice, wrath, and all uncharitableness," as rife in the writings, and therefore in the hearts, of religious polemics, as they are in those of the fiercest political antagonists; and he says in thoughtful seriousness, "Was not Christianity sent to produce peace on earth, and goodwill to men? Is it not said that love is its cardinal excellence? Can these men, any of them, really believe in the Christian religion, which places charity at the head of the Christian virtues?" I admit to you, without hesitation, all this bitterness is wrong,

cannot be justified, and is condemned by the volume about which these men contend. To speak the truth in love is one of its own injunctions. But recollect that even the best of men are imperfect, and that nothing so strongly appeals to our imperfections, and brings them into such activity, as contradiction and controversy. It is not true to say there is more bitterness in theological than in any other kind of controversy; but it is true that there ought to be less. One thing should not be forgotten, that the importance of the subject naturally renders men more earnest than any other does, and that earnestness, it must be admitted, too generally degenerates into unseemly violence and bitterness. There is in every human heart, however morally excellent and holy, some corruption lying underneath its excellences, which by controversy is too often brought to the surface; just as sediment at the bottom of clear water is stirred up by agitating the vessel containing it.

The equal mental power with which opposing systems are maintained, is to a mind unskilled in dialectics, and unable to detect the fallacies which lurk, and the sophistry which abounds, in erroneous argumentation, often very trying. It is admitted, it is impossible to question it, that great ability is possessed and displayed by all parties in the arena of religious strife, by the combatants for error as well as by those who support truth. And who can wonder at this, since the father of lies has perhaps the most wonderful intellect in the universe next to the Deity. In contending armies upon the field of battle, equal courage, skill, and prowess, are often displayed for a long time

by both sides, the wrong as well as the right; and a spectator of the awful conflict may be at a loss to determine which will gain the victory, and which deserves to gain it. There is no error so palpable even to common sense, but it may be defended by arguments so ingenious as to defy ordinary minds to detect their fallacies and expose the sophistry by which they are urged. Truth is often with the weaker party, weaker I mean in the use of dialectic weapons. A skilful polemic may often make error appear more plausible than truth.

The apparent equality of moral excellencies, in the advocates of opposing systems of opinions, is sometimes perplexing, and in some cases, even greater amiability may seem to be with those who advocate error, than with those who contend for truth. It must not be forgotten that religious truth is intended to produce two results, love to God and love to man: in other words morality and piety. Remember this, for it is of vast importance you should remember it. Penitence, faith, inward holiness, devoutness, heavenliness, are all parts of religion, without which the fairest morality and most beautiful amiability are, in the sight of God, nothing worth, and will be found totally unavailing to salvation. There may be much general amiability without an atom of general piety. The only true standard of moral excellence is the Bible, and that places God before us as the first object of regard. Systems, as well as men, are to be judged of by their fruits; but then we must always ask what kind of fruits they are designed to produce. Bible truths must produce Bible fruits, and these are something more

than the moralities, amiabilities, and courtesies of life, valuable, and necessary, and important, as these are.

The present unsettled state of controversy completes the perplexity. It would seem as if we were now no nearer the adjustment of our differences than ever. Sects are as numerous, their creeds as various and as diverse, and their contests as eager as ever, after all the reasoning which has been employed, and the volumes which have been written through so many ages. But surely this should not add much to your difficulty, for if diversity of opinion exist at any time, it may be expected to exist at all times. Men's minds are constituted in one age as they are in another, and may be expected to differ in all ages. It may, however, be hoped that, under the prevalence of a more earnest piety and the establishment of sounder canons of criticism and interpretation, aided by the dispensations of Providence, and a more copious effusion of the Holy Spirit, a greater approximation of sects and opinions will take place; and for such a state of things all should devoutly pray and hope. In looking at this prevalence of diversified opinion, and seemingly endless controversy, let us enquire if, while admitting it to be an evil, we may not discover some good, which, by the ordering of Providence, will be eventually, and even is now, brought out from it. Does not this diversity of sects and sharpness of controversy, effectually tend to preserve the purity of the sacred text of the Bible? Suppose there were in some large town one public reservoir, from which all the inhabitants drew their supplies of water; and suppose, further, there were some considerable diversity of opinion as to

the real qualities and properties of the water, while all considered the water to be necessary; would they not all watch each other that no liberty whatever was taken with the common source, to corrupt it by infusion into it of anything which would make it more agreeable to the purposes and tastes of any party, or any individual, or to diminish its supply, or in any way to interfere with its general benefit? They might sometimes dispute, and very sharply too, about the quality of the water, and some bad feeling might be generated in the course of their disputes; but still their natural jealousies would make them all protectors of the reservoir, and guardians of its purity and preservation. Something like this occurs in the diversity of sects; they have the Bible common to them all, and they all profess to be founded upon it. They differ in opinion as to its contents, but this very difference makes them keep a sharp look out upon each other to see that none of them corrupt the text, either by way of interpolation, alteration, or excision. Such attempts were indeed made in earlier ages, but they were detected and exposed. And copies multiplied by millions, in various languages, and held in the hands of various churches and denominations, prevent this now. The existence of sects and controversies guarantees to us therefore a pure and uncorrupted Bible.

Then, does it not tend to make the Bible more examined and thoroughly searched? How little is this book explored in Popish countries, where differences of opinion are repressed and controversy forbidden! How much more gold is brought up in California, where any one may dig and explore for himself, than

in those places where the mines are a royal monopoly, and none may dig but for the crown! What additions are made to the stock of scriptural knowledge, where the stern voice of the church forbids the exercise and right of private judgment, the publication of individual opinion, and the existence and maintenance of controversy? Even if error by this means could be shut out, how much of truth is excluded with it! How little, as compared with Protestant writers, have Roman Catholics added to our stores of biblical knowledge!

Has not God overruled the zeal of party for the spread of his cause? Do not the sects quicken each other's zeal by the power of rivalry? Is not this the case both at home and abroad? I acknowledge that in this zeal there is an infusion of sectarianism, and so far it is a corruption; but there is nothing absolutely pure in our world, and this very infusion may stimulate the efforts of the zealot. A propagator of Methodism, Church of Englandism, Presbyterianism, or Congregationalism, may be stimulated by sectarianism in his efforts to spread his particular opinions, but still with these he carries something more and something better, for he carries with him the gospel of salvation. I have no doubt that sectarianism does add something to our zeal, even in our home and foreign missions, and so far may seem to corrupt it; but on the other hand, it prevents us from sinking into a state of inertness and stagnancy. The Roman Church tells us she can do this without the rivalry of sects. This is not quite true. It is this very rivalry which has in part enabled her to gain her wide extent and dominion.

Witness the controversies as to doctrine between the Jesuits and the Dominicans, and between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, the conflict of the Gallican and Ultramontane opinions, and the disputes between her various missionary orders as to their respective proceedings in the East.

The existence of this diversity gives opportunity also (alas that so few should be forward to avail themselves of it!) for manifesting our forbearance towards each other, and bringing into exercise that "charity which is the bond of perfectness." It would be difficult to say which would be the most beautiful spectacle, a church uniform in opinion, or a church somewhat multiform in sentiment, yet maintaining a unity of spirit in the bond of peace. You thus see that some good may be brought out of the evil of controversy and the prevalence of sectarianism. The entrance of moral evil into God's wise, benevolent, and holy administration, seemed to be evil, and only evil; yet how has God overruled it for a brighter and completer manifestation of His character!

II. I shall now advert to the wrong methods which many adopt to relieve themselves of the perplexity occasioned by this diversity. In some cases it leads, or tends to lead, to general scepticism, and a total abandonment of all religion, under despair of ever finding out the truth. Men are apt to say, "We will give it all up, for who amidst such endless diversity can hope to find the truth?" But is this rational? Do men act thus in other matters about which much diversity prevails? Do they give up politics because of the numerous parties into which, on that controversial

subject men are divided? Do they abandon the subject of finance, political economy, or metaphysics, on this ground? And why should they do so in religion? How many have found out what they conceive to be the truth, and are reposing in peace upon their convictions! And why may not you? Abjure then the idea of abandoning religion on this ground. You will find this to be no excuse at the day of judgment. God has given you an intellect capable of investigating the subject, and will hold you responsible for the exercise of it in this particular. Men are divided in opinion upon food, medicine, and the best means of promoting health; and will you therefore give up all care about the best way to maintain your life, health and comfort? Truth is to be found somewhere, and it is an indolent disposition which leads us to give up the pursuit, because we do not, by a kind of intuition, or a hasty first view of the subject, know what it is, and where it is to be found. You must search after it. Your salvation depends upon your finding and embracing those truths with which it is connected. Multitudes have found it, and so may you.

Some few persons, unable to decide upon the truth as regards doctrines, have contented themselves with observing, as they suppose, the practical parts of religion, and have relinquished all care about what they call dogmas. They have attempted to construct a religion to be irrespective of the peculiarities of sect or creed, and to consist wholly of moral duties, with perhaps a few exercises of general devotion. This is deism. It is true they thus get rid of controversy, but at the same time they get rid of Christianity also. The

Scriptures are set aside entirely, and all the great facts and truths of revelation are repudiated. The Bible is not merely a code of morals to be obeyed and practised, but a declaration of facts and truths to be believed. Scripture ethics rest on Scripture doctrines. Faith, as well as practice, is the demand of revelation.

But the great and effectual relief from the perplexities of controversy, is supplied, say Papists, by Roman Catholicism. The Church of Rome professes that it is, by its doctrine and discipline, as set forth in its councils, canons, and creeds, a perpetual living tribunal, to decide all matters of religious faith and practice, and thus to prevent all controversy; and all doctrines are settled and determined for its members by the Church as the authoritative and infallible expounder of the truth. This is the lure it holds forth to those who are without its pale, who are perplexed with controversy, and distracted by religious strifes and the multitude of religious sects; "Come with us; we are the true Church, possessing authority and infallibility to decide upon doctrine, which is thus provided for you without the labour of inquiry, the pain of suspense, the disquietude of doubt, or the peril of mistake. Receive the faith of the Church, and believe as the Church believes; it guarantees your safety in all that you receive with this implicit faith. You will thus be taken out of the divisions, distractions, and controversies of Protestantism, and find rest for your weary soul in the lap and on the bosom of your holy mother, the Church." This is somewhat attractive, it must be confessed, and if it were true would be quite satisfactory; but it is awfully deceptive. Where in the

Scripture is any church invested with the authority to be a living umpire, and to decide all controversies? Where is there any allusion to such a tribunal? Is it not to the Scripture, and not to the Church, we are everywhere directed for settling the question, "What is Truth?" Even if the Church were this living tribunal, we contend that the Papacy, so far from being the true church, is an awful apostacy, and repugnant to every part of the New Testament. Instead of being the judge of truth, it is a false witness, whose testimony is a compound of the most palpable falsehoods and soul-destroying errors; whose voice continually speaks lies and nonsense. The claim of the Church of Rome to infallibility, which is the basis of its living tribunal, is repugnant alike to reason, to Scripture, and to the facts of its own history. It acknowledges that infallibility is not the attribute of its individual members, but only of the Pope, or of the collective body of the church assembled in a General Council. But is it not an universal law of logic, that what is in the genus must be in the species? If, therefore, the collective body is infallible, so must be its individual members. How can a collection of fallibles, multiply them as you will, make up an infallible? Besides, it is not yet decided, and never has been, where this infallibility resides; whether in the Pope without a General Council, a General Council without a Pope, or a Pope and a General Council. Thus the claim is repugnant to reason. It is equally so to Scripture, which in a thousand places proclaims the liability of all men to err, except such as are under Divine inspiration. Nor is the claim less contradic-

tory to the history of Romanism, which declares that Pope has been against Pope, the same Pope against himself, and Council against Council. There is scarcely a doctrine of Popery which has not been the subject of controversy within the bosom of the Papal community. The variations of Popery have been almost as numerous as those of Protestantism. Where then is its infallibility? The claim of the Church of Rome to be this living tribunal, which is to settle once for all, and for everybody, what is truth, and to prevent all controversy by forbidding the exercise of private judgment, is in direct contradiction to the word of God, which calls upon every man for himself to "search the Scriptures," to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good." To constitute the church the tribunal which is to decide for us what is truth, without our examination of the Scriptures for ourselves, is to make all its members believers in the church rather than in the word of God, and thus to put the church in the place of the Bible as the object of faith. This method of deciding controversies and settling the question, What is truth? renders the Scriptures all but useless for the people; and therefore is consistent only with the prohibition of the free use of the Scriptures by them. This scheme is an utter degradation of man's nature as a rational being, and is a plan never adopted in reference to anything else. Who would endure such a method of determining questions of literature, science, politics, law, or art? Why therefore should a man be debarred from entering on the most momentous of all topics, and be exposed to the consequences of eternal ruin,

by implicitly trusting to the judgment of others? How is any man to know whether he really believes what the Church believes, and all it believes? Who can search the numberless folios which contain the faith of the church, and be satisfied that he has not omitted something which the church requires of him? And though creeds drawn up by Popes, and catechisms and manuals by learned doctors and eminent bishops, may be put into the hands of the people, yet as no individual man, however elevated, not even the Pope himself, is infallible, how is anyone to be satisfied that there is no error in these compositions? Besides, as no one can have access to the church except as it is represented to him by some individual priest, who is in the place of both God and the church to him; how can anyone be sure, since that individual priest is fallible, but that he may err in the views he may give of the church's doctrine? This living tribunal, by suppressing controversy, destroys liberty, and turns the whole subject of religion into a matter of slavish submission to human authority. And with liberty, piety also, to a considerable extent, expires. The dull uniformity produced by the compulsion of authority is no compensation for the loss of that activity and spirit which are kept alive by the neighbourhood and zeal of rival sects. "The Gallican Church no doubt looked upon it as a signal triumph when she prevailed upon Louis XIV. to repeal the Edict of Nantes, which repeal, by refusing toleration to the Huguenots, suppressed the voice of controversy and the existence of sects. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look, after this period, for her Fenelons and her

Pascals? Where for the distinguished monuments of piety and learning which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived she had no occasion for it, when there was no lustre of Christian holiness surrounding her: nor for learning, when she had no longer any enemies to confute, or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious as she pleased; and amidst the silence and darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains and retired to rest. The accession of numbers she gained by suppressing her opponents, was like the small extension of length a body acquires by death; the feeble remains of life were extinguished, and she lay a putrid corpse, a public nuisance, filling the air with pestilential exhalations."* Such then are the objections to a living and infallible tribunal for the decision of controversy, as claimed by the Church of Rome.

But perhaps it will be asked whether all denominations even of Nonconformists, do not put forth creeds, articles, and catechisms which they not only teach, but require their members to believe? Certainly, as acknowledged compendiums of their views of the word of God; but they allow every man to test them by the Scriptures, and to reject them if he sees fit. They are held forth to guide but not to compel. They are proposed, but not imposed. They are submitted for examination and instruction to the judgment, but they are not made to bind the conscience.

You see then, young men, that the perplexities of controversy cannot be avoided by surrendering up your

* Robert Hall's "Zeal without Innovation."

judgment into the hands of priests; but that you are to employ it diligently for yourselves in coming to a conclusion upon the various questions which divide and agitate the religious world.

III. The question however comes back: What is to be done? How is the mind to be relieved from its perplexity in listening to the contradictory views which reply to the question, "What is truth?" Is an inquirer to set about to read and study the religious opinions of all the denominations in existence? That would be an endless and needless labour. It would be a useless consumption of time, and would only end in still deeper and more painful perplexity. Take the case of any other book than the Bible; a legal statute, or a history, or any other document about which a great diversity of interpretation existed, and which was in your own hands; would you, in order to know its true meaning, think it necessary to read all the conflicting opinions? No! You would say, "I will read and study the document itself. I have it in my possession in the vernacular tongue, and I will read and judge for myself." Act thus in reference to the Bible and religious differences.

Study the Scriptures. Search the word of God for yourselves. Be intimately acquainted with your Bibles, especially the New Testament. But there is a right and a wrong way of doing this. The exhortation to search the Scriptures is expressive of a particular state of mind, as well as of an outward duty. Carry to the Bible no preconceived notions with which it is your previous determination to make everything square. Read the word of God with a

simple and sincere desire to know its real meaning. In reading the Scriptures there must be no attempt to try what, by the aid of ingenuity and a previous bias, they may be made to say, but a simple desire to know what they do say. Read with entire and absolute impartiality, just as you would the prescription of a physician who had given you directions for food and medicine, to restore and preserve your health. Let there be an humble and teachable disposition. "Receive with meekness the engrafted word." "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he show his way." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God." And whatever exercise of our intellect may be carried on, and however convinced we may be that the intellect must be exercised, there should always be entertained a humble and wholesome distrust of our own understanding. In searching the Scriptures we must consider their design as well as their meaning; that they are intended to communicate not only knowledge, but faith and holiness. The Bible is a book to make us wise unto salvation. It contains a "doctrine according to godliness." "Sanctify them through thy truth," was the prayer of Christ for his disciples. Divine truth is intended to produce a divine life. To read in order to know, or to support and defend, a system, is a low and unworthy end. To search the Scriptures aright, you must give up and abstain from all sinful indulgences. "Laying aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, receive with meekness the engrafted word," is the injunction of the apostle. The lusts of the mind, the pride of intellect, the love of

wealth, thirst after human applause (as well as the lusts of the flesh), impair the mental vision, and smite the soul with spiritual blindness, insomuch that holy truth, however plain, remains undiscovered.

There is another disposition to be carried to the Scriptures in our perusal of them, and that, on account of its importance, I place by itself, that it may be very conspicuously seen, as seriously considered, and as vividly and practically remembered; I mean that suggested by our Lord, where he says, "If any man will do his (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine which I speak, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." A real obedience to the will of God, as far as we at present know it, united with a sincere and hearty determination to do it upon all further discoveries of it, to whatever risks, sacrifices, and inconveniences such obedience may expose us, is the best way of coming to a right knowledge of the truth. We must love truth, not only for its own sake, but for its holy tendency and effect: and he that is most anxious to obtain holiness by truth, is most likely to ascertain truth for the sake of holiness. Right dispositions are the way to obtain right opinions. Divine truth, unlike scientific knowledge, is intended, as well as adapted, to produce moral results; and if we are not anxious to obtain these, we are not likely to come to a knowledge of the truths themselves.

There must also be a very earnest prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. There are undoubtedly some things in the Bible hard to be understood; but as to what pertains to salvation, it is all as clear as crystal. But if there be light in the Bible, there is darkness in

us. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The safe and proper, and only safe and proper, manner of approaching the heavenly oracle, is that which David manifested, when he thus prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." So also the apostle entreated for the Colossians. "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." It may not strike some, that although we have the book it is necessary in addition to have the teaching of the Author: and if it were not absolutely necessary, yet surely it would be considered a privilege, even as regards a human production. But it is in this case necessary. How powerful is the influence of our inward corruption in blinding and bewildering our judgments! How liable are we to err! How momentous a matter is it on which to mistake! How numerous and how fatal are the mistakes that are made! Unless therefore we not only pray, but give ourselves to prayer, for divine illumination, we are likely, even with the Bible in our hands, to go wrong. That the meaning of the Bible may be mistaken, and is so, no one can doubt. The subject of this chapter proves it. How many errors are there in the world on the subjects of divine revelation!

As your safest guide amidst the diversities of religious opinion which exist, and as the best mode of relieving your mind from the perplexity occasioned by controversy, acquire the elements of decided per-

sonal godliness. These lie within a very narrow compass, are common to most denominations of professing Christians and, with whatever other sentiments they may be associated, will secure the possession of eternal life. Be sure to be right on great and fundamental points. Be upon the foundation, and then though you are a little off the perpendicular, yet you will not fall. And what are these grand essentials, without which no man can be saved, and with which every man will be saved, whatever in other respects may be his creed or his church? Repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and evangelical holiness. I do not mean to say that these constitute all that God has revealed, and therefore all that we need concern ourselves about. By no means. There are innumerable other matters which are found in the word of God, but these are the substance of it, the essentials to salvation. Personal godliness is the great preservative from serious error. As there are instincts in irrational creatures which lead them to select good and wholesome food, and to refuse and reject such substances as are noxious, so there are certain sentiments and systems as to which it is scarcely necessary to prove to the spiritual mind that they are false, for the spiritual taste pronounces them to be bad. The holy life within refuses and rejects them at once as repugnant to its nature; and the stronger and healthier that life is, the greater is the force of that repugnance. Hence the necessity of our being possessed, not only of true personal godliness, but of high degrees of it. He who feels all the vitalising power of sound doctrine in making him holy, heavenly, and happy, will be in small

danger of mischief from other doctrines, and feel little necessity to inquire into other sentiments. The man who finds his strength firm, his health glowing, his spirits buoyant, upon good, plain, nutritious food, will have no need to study the various systems of medicine and dietetics. He may let physicians wrangle on, without troubling himself about their conflicting opinions. So the man strong in faith, lively in hope, and ardent in the love of God and man; he who has joy and peace in believing; he who is able to mortify his corruptions, and invigorate his graces, by the views of divine truth which he has gained, need not read through a book of religious denominations to find out what is truth, for he has the "witness in himself."

It would be of material service, and a great help to you, in deciding for yourself in matters of controversy as to what is truth, to gather from the Scripture, by a devout and careful perusal, broad and comprehensive views of its general purport and design, in reference to doctrine, ceremonies, and government. Broad and general views on any subject greatly assist us in understanding its minuter parts and details. Survey the system of divine truth in the Bible as you would a vast and complicated piece of machinery, by first of all not examining each particular part, but taking a view of it as a whole, in its general design and larger combinations. Faith in the truths of revelation is not to be obtained by the separate examination at first of its various points, historical, doctrinal, or practical; for no one would be likely to become an intelligent and firm believer in Christianity, if he endeavoured to make every fact, every doctrine, and every precept

clear, certain, and beyond dispute, before he adopted the whole as a divine revelation, and before he had become acquainted with its general design and more important and fundamental truths. Those are most likely to understand details who are best acquainted with generals, as from them light comes upon particulars. Lord Bacon compares the conduct of those students and defenders of Christianity, who act upon the principle of beginning with particulars, and going on to generals, to those persons who would light a large hall by placing a candle in each corner, instead of hanging in the middle of it a large chandelier, which would send its light into the darkest recesses. Or, to change the metaphor, he who seizes and keeps possession of the great whole of Christianity, in its general truths and designs, is like a confident and successful general, who seizes and keeps possession of the metropolis and its citadel; while he who spends his chief time, or his first pains, in getting a knowledge of mere details, is like the general who wastes his strength on the frontier, without ever making any grand attempt to possess the whole country.

As regards what are usually called doctrines, the Scriptures everywhere assert the lapsed, corrupt, and condemned state of human nature: in other words, that man is a guilty and unholy creature, who has fallen from his original state of righteousness, and who if recovered from this condition and restored to the favour of God, must be saved by some aid from without: that the design of the incarnation and death of our Lord Jesus Christ is to effect man's redemption from sin, guilt, and death, in a manner harmonious

with the perfections of the divine character, and the principles of God's moral government: that the blessings consequent to man upon this system of mediation, are pardon, peace, and holiness here, and eternal life hereafter: and that the conditions on which (as a sine qua non, but not as a meritorious cause) these blessings are bestowed, are repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; in short, the salvation of sinners, and at the same time the manifestation of the glory of God's moral character. Now this, one would think, must be conceded by every one who has obtained the least acquaintance with the word of God.

What a guide would these views prove to the settlement of many controversies! Through what labyrinths of opinion would these first principles of the Christian scheme lead you in safety! How many details would they unfold, and how many connected doctrines would they include, and establish, and render evident! Let them then be deeply rooted in your minds as so many fundamental truths, and be made to bear on all the controversies which you may hear of or read. Bring all other sentiments to the ordeal of this question, "Do they profess or deny the corruption of human nature, so clearly laid down in the word of God, and its recovery from guilt and depravity by a system of mediation through Christ, which unites the redemption of man and the manifestation of God's glory?"

A similar general reference to the ceremonial of the Old Testament will help you to settle many controversies on this subject. You cannot possibly read the

Gospels and Epistles without observing the contrast in one striking point of view presented between Judaism and Christianity, the former exhibiting so much that was ceremonial, the latter so little: the one being eminently a ritual system, the other no less eminently a spiritual one. When Christ suffered on Calvary, and expired with that triumphant shout, "It is finished!" he changed the whole aspect of revealed religion. On one side of the cross you behold the Law, with its priests, its sacrifices, and its rites, retiring from sight; on the other, you behold the Gospel, with its simple and spiritual institutions, coming forward into view. From that hour the great design of Christianity, was to form a character, of which a new, divine, and inward life should be the animating soul, and holiness in all its branches and beauties, should be the external manifestation. Christianity was intended, if not to put an end to ritualism, yet so to subordinate it to spirituality, holiness, and love, that it should be but as the fillet round the brow, or as the bracelet upon the arm, of piety. Christianity has left us nothing, in the form of ceremony, but baptism and the Lord's supper, and has said so little even about them as to lead us to suppose it considers them of very inferior importance to what is moral and spiritual. Just ask the question again, "What kind of religion does the New Testament chiefly design to teach, a ritual or a spiritual one?" Here again you will be furnished with a test of many a system. Connected with ceremonies is a priesthood. Observe what is said in the New Testament about this. How very little is said about reli-

gious officials, or functionaries of any kind, compared with what is said of other things. Christ is our Great High Priest, and all Christians are the priesthood. No other priest is mentioned. And as to bishops, pastors, or elders, their only functions mentioned are teaching and ruling. A sacerdotal order and sacerdotal acts are nowhere referred to. It nowhere appears the design of the apostles to make much of man, or to invest him with domination or spiritual authority in the church. Even they disclaimed being lords of God's heritage.

So again with regard to ecclesiastical polity; it will be well to take a general view of this question, as furnished by the New Testament. I say the New Testament, for the Old was the code of law for Judaism, as this is for Christianity. It would be no more proper to look to the constitution of the Jewish theocracy for the model of the Christian church, than it would be to the temple, its priests, and sacrifices, and ceremonies, for the regulation of Christian worship. The same difference is observable in the ecclesiastical character of Judaism and Christianity as is evident in their ceremonial. The Divine Author of our religion has furnished, by his confession before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world," that which is the key to all social religion, and ecclesiastical organisation. The elaboration, complexity, and secularity of earthly kingdoms do not appertain to His church, the characteristics of which are simplicity and spirituality. The design of church government is not so much the conversion of men's souls, as the fellowship, edification, and comfort of those who are already converted. The

church of Christ, consisting of the company of believers, must in all its institutions be adapted to spiritual men, and have respect to their order, harmony, and mutual helpfulness. It has nothing worldly in its nature or design. It is in the world, but not of it. The more spiritual and simple a scheme of ecclesiastical polity is, the more likely, upon the general principle just laid down, does it seem to be that it is an approximation to that which was set up by our Lord Jesus Christ. The more clearly it exhibits the church as a separate community, like the Jews amidst surrounding nations, dwelling apart by itself, governed by its own laws, animated by its own spirit, and pursuing its own objects, the more does it accord with all which the New Testament teaches on the subject.

An attention to these general aspects of Divine revelation will greatly assist us in coming to a conclusion upon most points of religious controversy.

Having made up your minds, upon evidence, as to what is truth, then have as little to do with religious controversy as you can. Seek a practical rather than polemical religion. Treat it as something rather to be done, than to be talked about. Be not fond of disputation. Be no religious knight-errant, running a-tilt against every one who differs from you. A pugnacious disposition, whether it proceed from natural combativeness, or prevailing vanity, is a dangerous thing to piety, which, like the dew, falls only in a still atmosphere, and lies longest in the shade. Be too much taken up with adding "to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness,

and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," to have much time for strife and contention.

Let it be your great concern to eat of the Bread of Life, pure and unadulterated, rather than mix up with it the grit and chaff of controversy; and to drink, and not trouble and foul, the clear Water of Life. Avoid a taste for curiosity in things unrevealed, a speculative turn concerning things mysterious, and a distempered zeal for what if true is comparatively little. "There is," says an old author, "a kind of intemperance in most of us, a wild and irregular desire to make things more or less than they are in themselves, and to remove them well-nigh out of sight by our additions and defalcations. Few there are who can be content with truth, and settle and rest in it as it appeareth in nakedness and simplicity in which it was first brought forth; but men are ever drawing out conclusions of their own, spinning out and weaving speculations, thin, unsuitable, and unfit to be worn, which yet they glory in and defend with more heat and animosity than they do that truth which is necessary and by itself sufficient without this art. For these are creatures of our own, shaped out in our phantasy, and so drest up by us with all accurateness and curiosity of diligence, that we fall at last in love with them, and apply ourselves to them with that closeness and adherency which dulleth and taketh off the edge of our affection to that which is most necessary, and so leaveth that neglected and last in our thoughts, which is main. As we read of the painter, who, having stretched his fancy and spent the force of his imagination in drawing Neptune to the

life, could not raise his after thoughts to the setting forth the majesty of Jupiter."

Love the closet of devotion more than the arena of contention; study the Bible more than the volume of angry discussion; and seek the company of the sons of peace, rather than association with those who say "We are for war." It is well, of course, to make yourselves acquainted generally with the subjects of controversy, especially those of the leading controversies of the day. No young man, for instance, should be ignorant of the evidences of Christianity, or of the great principles of Evangelical truth as opposed to Rationalism or Unitarianism, or of Protestantism as against Popery, in all their range and bearing. These are the questions of the day. And in order to contend earnestly for the "faith once delivered to the saints," we must know what the faith is, and both how it is assailed, and how it can be defended. Every man should know what he believes, and why he believes it; and thus "be able to give a reason, with meekness and fear, of the hope that is in him." He should take his side, and valiantly keep it. All this is proper and necessary, but it is a different thing to our reducing religion to a mere matter of controversy. How many are there whose whole godliness is a mere contest for a creed, or a church, without their having any true faith in Christ, or their being members of the church which he has purchased with his blood! What multitudes are now fierce for Protestantism, who have never embraced with their whole hearts one great and true Protestant principle! Oh that men were more anxious to practise Christianity than to dispute about

it! That they were as zealous for holiness as they seem to be for truth, and as anxious to imbibe the spirit and exhibit the image of Christ in their temper, character, and conduct, as they are concerned to embody his doctrines in their creeds! Young men, be ardent lovers of the truth, diligent seekers after it, constant followers of it, and impassioned admirers, valiant defenders, and zealous promoters of it: but at the same time, not pugnacious, restless, bitter, and bigoted disputants for it.

Having received, upon satisfactory evidence, the system of doctrine which you believe to be Scriptural, do not allow your convictions to be shaken, or your faith to be staggered, on account of any difficulties with which it may seem to be attended, nor by any cavils and objections brought against it, which you may not be able to answer. It is of great importance for you to remember, that there is no truth, however evident and certain it may be, against which an ingenious and dexterous sophist may not advance some plausible objections; and in connection with which its most assured believers may not see some difficulties which they are not able to explain. Mathematical science is the only department of human enquiry which excludes all doubts and difficulty. Even the experimental philosopher sometimes finds many difficulties in his path which he is unable to clear up, some ultimate laws which perplex and confound him, and some results which baffle him. Does he abandon himself to scepticism? Certainly not. He credits his proofs, he relies upon his ascertained facts, and says, "I am

puzzled; I see a difficulty which I cannot yet explain, but I hold fast my conviction of the truth of what I have proved, and wait for further light to clear up what is now dark. I cannot give up evidence because of difficulty, and thus relinquish what I do know for what I do not know." Is not this perfectly rational and entirely philosophical? I am anxious that you should act in this way in reference to religion, its doctrines, and its controversies. Receive whatever truth revelation makes known, and because it makes it known, no matter with what difficulty it may be attended, and wait for further light to enlighten what is now dark. By difficulty I mean something that you cannot perfectly understand; something that you cannot entirely harmonise with your previous notions; something that you cannot make quite to agree with some other portions of divine truth; something which may have been objected to by others whose objections you feel yourselves in some measure unable to answer. If convinced that any doctrine or facts is revealed, let not any difficulty connected with it confound you or shake your convictions. It may be well sometimes, when startled and perplexed with difficulties on one side of a question, to look at the difficulties on the other side. Suppose you reject a doctrine, or a system, because of something that you cannot explain, should you not encounter difficulties far more formidable in the opposite system? Have you not more evidence and less difficulty on the side you have taken, than you would find if you were to pass over to the other side? There is a one-sided way of looking at these

matters, practised by some people, which you should avoid. In very many cases, conviction must rest upon the balance of evidence and difficulty, there being some seeming proof and some sound objection on each side, and our business is to determine which side has more of the former, and less of the latter. I cannot therefore give you a more important piece of advice than this, never abandon evidence to follow difficulty, for it is like turning away from a lantern, somewhat dim it may be, but still a steady light, or from the moon, in a mist perhaps, to run after an ignis fatuus. And at the same time, do not allow yourselves to be driven from your convictions, because you cannot refute all the arguments, or remove all the difficulties, or meet all the objections, which may be brought against them. There are men, I repeat, of such subtle minds, of such logical power, and so clever in argument, as to make the worse appear the better cause; who can by fallacy and sophistry sustain the most palpable error, and make that truth doubtful which has to you the luminousness of the sun. Never be ashamed to say to such an opponent, "I cannot refute your arguments, or meet your objections, but I am unmoved by them." And I would reiterate the advice I have already given, Avoid controversy. Having found what you believe to be truth, believe it, love it, enjoy it, practise it, but do not be eager to dispute about it.

Whatever may be your convictions of the truth of the religious opinions you have embraced, cultivate, with a love of truth, a spirit of charity. There is a medium, which it should be your anxiety to discover,

between indifference to truth and a distempered zeal for it: between latitudinarianism on the one hand and bigotry on the other. There are some who make truth everything in religion, others who make it nothing: the former are the advocates of an unsanctified orthodoxy, the latter of an equally unsanctified charity: the one are the worshippers of a creed, the other the confounders of all creeds. The former say, "No matter how well a man acts, if he does not hold these opinions:" the other's reply, "It is no matter what opinions he holds, provided he acts well." Both are wrong. There can be no right belief of the truth which does not lead to holiness: and there can be no holiness which does not spring from right belief of the truth. Be you therefore the zealous advocates of truth, for error is sin. Error cannot sanctify. If a man may disbelieve one truth, and be innocent, he may disbelieve two; if two, ten; if ten, half the Bible; if half the Bible, the whole. Affect no false candour, no spurious charity, as if all sentiments were equally unimportant. This is treason against truth, and the God of truth. Let not all the various sects, denominations, and creeds, appear in your eye as the beautiful colours of the rainbow. That is a false and bad figure, and the very germ of infidelity. But at the same time guard against the opposite extreme of a want of charity towards those who differ from you. It is not your business, or mine, to fix the boundary line of religious opinion which divides those who will be saved from those who will be lost. The Church of Rome, with insufferable arrogance, and a daring invasion of the

prerogative of Heaven, has fixed that line in the pale of her communion. Imitate not this impious assumption. And while you avoid that highest of all pretensions, the determining who shall or who shall not be admitted to the kingdom of heaven, guard against the lesser mischiefs of controversy; I mean that bitterness of spirit and exclusiveness of feeling which we are but too apt to cherish towards those who differ from us in lesser matters. Charity is as much a part of truth as doctrine. No man believes the Bible who rejects charity. The want of charity is as truly a heresy as a disbelief in the divinity of Christ. The want of charity will as certainly exclude a man from heaven as the want of faith. "Now abide faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." With one hand, lay hold of faith; with the other, lay hold of charity; then, and then only, may you cherish hope.

And now, Young Men, let me endeavour at any rate to impress upon you the infinitely, eternally, and therefore inconceivably, momentous nature of the subject about which all these controversies are carried on. Oh, what interests and what issues, beyond the compass and the power of any mind but that which is Infinite to grasp, are comprehended in that word, Religion! Science, art, literature, politics, law, medicine, all appertain to time, to earth, to the body; but religion relates to the soul, to heaven, to eternity. What are all the questions which have been asked, the parties that have been formed, the controversies that have been carried on, in reference to the former

of these classes of subjects, but matters of momentary interest, and trifles light as air, compared with the latter? Of what importance are all the questions, the sects, the parties, the controversies, of an earthly nature, to "the congregation of the dead," to the inhabitants of the unseen world, to the spirits of just men made perfect, or to the lost souls in prison? What will they all be to you a few years hence? What may they be to you next week? But the great controversy about religion has in all three worlds, heaven, earth, and hell, an interest that will continue through all eternity. This is a controversy in which you, each one of you, is personally interested. It involves your eternal destiny, and will be a matter of infinite moment to you millions and millions of ages hence. Surely, surely, this consideration, if anything can do it, will throw over your mind an air of deep and solemn seriousness. The levity and frivolity you carry to other questions; the carelessness and half-heartedness with which you regard other controversies must be checked here. You must ask the question, "What is truth?" with a mind looking up into heaven, down into the bottomless pit, and abroad upon eternity. And with a recollection that, various as are the answers to that question returned from those around you, your torment or your happiness for ever and ever will be influenced by the answer to it on which you decide. Oh, if you would but enter thus seriously, anxiously, and prayerfully, into the subject, there would be little danger of your going wrong on this momentous topic.

Still you must expect, notwithstanding all your so-

licitude, to be the subject of some perplexity, as long as you are an inhabitant of this world. Be thankful, however, that what is essential to salvation is so plain that he who runs may read it. Repent, believe, love, be holy: Is there any mystery here? How many sects agree in this! Of how many creeds this is the essence! How much of the strife of controversy lies outside of this circle! How many minor truths a man may not believe, and yet be saved, if he believe these great fundamentals! How many lesser errors he may have unhappily embraced, and yet not be lost, if he is in no error here! He that keeps his eye upon the pole-star and the greater constellations, will steer his vessel safely, though he may not be intimately acquainted with the stars of lesser magnitude and brilliancy. To adopt, in conclusion, the directions and words of Saurin: "Buy the truth, which requires the sacrifice of dissipation, of indolence, of precipitancy, of prejudice, of obstinacy, of curiosity, of the passions. I comprise the matter in seven precepts:

"Be attentive.

"Do not be discouraged by labour.

"Suspend your judgment.

"Let prejudice yield to reason.

"Be teachable.

"Restrain your avidity of knowledge.

"In order to edify your mind, subdue your heart."

But shall we always live in shades and grope in darkness? Will there always be a veil between the porch and the sanctuary? Will God always lead us between chasms and gulfs? Shall we for ever dwell near the battlefield of religious controversy, and be

within sound of its artillery and the range of its shot? Shall we always hear the confused noise of its warriors, and the cry of defeat, mingling with the shouts of victory? Shall we always have to struggle with argument from without, and with doubt and suspense within? Oh, no! Presently this night of our ignorance, this dark night, will end, and we shall enter into that blessed world where there is no need of the sun, because the Lamb is the light thereof. In heaven we shall know all things by blessed intuition. We shall repose around the fountain of celestial radiance, where the sound of controversy will be as unheard as the din of arms. In heaven we shall understand mysteries of nature, providence, grace, and glory. All difficulties will be solved. All objections will be silenced. How will this perfect light fill us with perfect joy? How delightful will it be to drink knowledge for ever from its divine source, with the assurance that it is pure from any admixture of error! How blissful thus to spend eternity! "This is the revelation of God to us, and there is not in religion a more joyful and triumphant consideration than this perpetual progress which the soul makes in the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at an ultimate period. Here truth has the advantage of fable. No fiction, however bold, presents to us a conception so elevating and astonishing as this interminable line of heavenly excellence. To look upon the glorified spirit, as going on from strength to strength; adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; making approaches to goodness which is infinite; for ever adorning the heavens with new beauties, and brighten-

ing in the splendours of moral glory, through all the ages of eternity: has something in it so transcendent and ineffable, as to satisfy the most unbounded ambition of an immortal mind." Young men, have you this ambition? If not, take it up from this moment; it is the noblest which God can inspire, or the human bosom receive.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHARACTER OF JOSEPH.

How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? GENESIS xxxix, 9.

THE Bible, viewed apart from its highest character as a revelation of divine, eternal, and immutable truth, and from its design as intended to make men "wise unto salvation," is the most instructive, entertaining, and interesting volume in the world, uniting, as it does, every species of writing, every variety of subject, and every style of composition. Hence the testimony of Sir William Jones, a man who, by the exertion of rare intellectual talents, acquired a knowledge of languages and literature which has seldom been equalled, and scarcely, if ever, surpassed. "I have carefully and regularly perused the Scriptures," says this truly great man, "and am of opinion that this volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written." Such a testimony, borne by a scholar who was intimately acquainted with twenty-eight different languages, and with the best works which had been published in most of them, deserves attention,

and must carry weight with every considerate mind. The page of Holy Writ on which we open in this chapter justifies this eulogy: for where is the judge of literary composition who will not pronounce the history of Joseph to be one of the most exquisitely pathetic narratives ever written?

Before I proceed to enter upon the character of Joseph, I will point out what, besides the exhibition of a splendid example of human excellence, appears to me to be the design of God in preserving his deeply interesting and eventful history. This narrative is a representation of Providence in miniature. Here we see God working out His wise and benevolent schemes by means and instruments the most varied, the most unlikely, and seemingly the most opposite; and by a series of events which, as they arise singly and separately, appear to favour the designs of the bad and to oppress the good, but which are all made to terminate in the triumph of virtue and piety. Here, on a small scale, we see a wonderful and complicated mechanism, numerous wheels moving in opposite directions, but all made to subserve one wise and holy purpose, and thus to furnish an historical and beautiful illustration of the declaration, that "All things work together for good to them that love God." In many parts of Scripture we hear Providence speaking, but here we see it acting; and making evil, without altering its nature or excusing its agents, subserve the good. Here we see that though truth and holiness for a while may be trodden down by the iron heels of falsehood, vice, and power, they shall at length lift up their heads with joy, and be crowned with glory and honour.

But I now take up the other purpose of this beautiful narrative, and that is to exhibit, for admiration and imitation, an extraordinary pattern of human excellence. Much of the Bible is historical and biographical. It is a gallery of portraits, both of good and bad men; some merely sketched in outline; some showing part of the figure only, and some drawn at full length. This makes the Scriptures at once interesting and instructive. We see sin in living shapes, depraved, leprous, beastly, diabolical, and learn to hate it. We see holiness, fair and beautiful, though by no means perfectly angelical and heavenly, and we are by such examples taught to love it, and helped to acquire it. Let us, then, now contemplate the character of Joseph. It is not my intention, for it is not in my power, in a single chapter to enter much at length into the details of his touching history. I must take for granted your acquaintance with them, and can do nothing more than give you so much of the narrative as shall help you in studying his character.

And, first of all, let us look at Joseph in that situation where the germ of all his future excellences began to develope, his father's tent. There were laid, in his filial piety and his true religion, the foundations of that noble and lofty character which all nations and ages have delighted to contemplate. It is unquestionably true, and should ever be borne in mind by parents and children, that the rudiments of character are formed in early life, and at home, and then and there those seeds of good or evil are sown which bear in future years their appropriate fruits. He was the favourite child of his father, who in a manner most

injudicious in itself, most dangerous to the object of his preference, and most destructive of his own peace, displayed his partiality by "the coat of many colours," and other marks of parental distinction. This partiality, though unwisely manifested, was grounded in part on Joseph's exemplary conduct, for he was a most dutiful son, and one that feared God. At the same time however he was the object of hatred and envy to his brethren. This was caused partly by his father's partiality; partly by his artless simplicity, not perhaps untinctured by vanity which had been increased by indulgence, and which showed itself in relating his dreams; and partly by the information which he gave of the misconduct of his brothers; for all these things tended, doubtless, to increase and exasperate their ill-will. But their enmity was produced chiefly by his good conduct and blameless character. They hated him because "their own deeds were evil and their brother's righteous." It was the enmity of the wicked towards the good. He was their constant reprover by the silent reproach of his holy example. I scarcely know a situation more trying, or requiring more firmness, humility, meekness, wisdom, and caution, than that of a pious and dutiful child, loved by his parents on account of his excellence of character, and surrounded by brothers of an opposite description. If any of you are in that situation, pray earnestly to God to make His grace sufficient for you. With the murderous conspiracy of Joseph's cruel and unnatural brothers you are well acquainted. I shall draw no picture of his cries and entreaties, when he was seized by them, and cast into a pit to be left to starve; but

I will for one moment suggest how, in that horrible situation, he must have been sustained and comforted by the religion he had learnt at home; and what else could meet his case? What a situation for one who had never till now been from beneath the protection of paternal care and tenderness; whose face the wind of heaven had never hitherto visited too roughly; whose spirit mortification had never galled; whose heart affliction had never yet pierced! But his gracious God and his easy conscience were with him there; and in those mournful and desolate circumstances he found that he was not alone. O religion! thou divine and seraphic companion and comforter, thou wilt never leave us, however forlorn our condition or gloomy our prospects.

I also pass by the successful intercession of Judah for his life, and the providential arrival of the Arabian caravan, and follow Joseph down into Egypt, to witness his conduct in the house of Potiphar, to whom he was sold as a slave. Instead of cursing his lot, yielding to sullen despondency, and making his master angry by hopeless misery, he accommodated himself, by the aid of religion, to his circumstances, and applied all his faculties to serve his master, to secure his confidence, and conciliate his kindness. And he was successful. You see how wise it is, instead of giving up all for lost in unfavourable circumstances, and sinking into absolute despair, to resolve, by God's blessing, to do all we can to improve our condition. Learn, young men, to bear up with patience, fortitude, and hope, against adverse circumstances. It is always too soon to despair in this world. It was an old Greek

proverb, "We ascend downwards." And in Bunyan's inimitable allegory, the "Valley of Humiliation" lay in the direct road to exaltation. If by any cause you are brought into a less favourable situation than you have been accustomed to occupy, go diligently and cheerfully to work, and determine, by God's grace, to make even this bitter experience subservient to your future welfare. It may be necessary to prepare you for something higher and better. Never abandon hope. The mainspring of exertion is broken when this is gone.

Joseph's conduct in the house of Potiphar was so exemplary for diligence and fidelity, that it drew upon him, first of all the favour of God, and next the esteem of man, for he was soon advanced to a high place of trust and honour in the establishment of his master. The reason of Potiphar's conduct in thus promoting his Hebrew slave is given by the historian in the following words: "He saw that the Lord was with him, and the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." Here is one of the ten thousand instances which corroborate the declaration of the apostle, that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." True piety is the parent of every virtue which is either useful to man or pleasing to God; and when confirmed and illustrated by a faithful life, is the best recommendation a youth can offer to one whose confidence he wishes to secure. Few men are so blind to their own interest as not to know the value and to appreciate the services of an able, diligent, and faithful servant, and rarely does it happen that such a servant,

where there is room for it, is not promoted. Depend upon it, there is a buoyancy in talent and virtue which will make them rise to the surface. "Seest thou," says Solomon, "a man diligent in business, he shall stand before kings." "I," said Benjamin Franklin, "can attest the truth of that, for I have transacted with five monarchs in my time." It was as a servant that Franklin commenced his wonderful career, and by the fidelity and diligence he displayed in that capacity he laid the foundations of his future fame. Innumerable instances have occurred of eminent and excellent servants becoming partners and proprietors of the establishments in which they once acted in a very subordinate capacity.

In the chapter entitled "Entrance upon Life," I reminded you that sincere, heartfelt, and very decided piety is necessary to prepare for those sudden, violent, and unexpected temptations, which often beset the young traveller on life's eventful journey; especially in circumstances of promotion and prosperity. Joseph soon experienced the truth of this. He was, we are informed, a young man of such personal appearance, as was likely to attract the attention and excite the passions of an unprincipled and flagitious woman. Beauty is the production of God, and as one of His gifts is, like every other, to be considered good in itself, and to be received with thankfulness; but how often does it prove a snare to its possessor, and a temptation to others! It had nearly proved more fatal to Joseph than even the envy of his brothers. The last threatened only his body, but this endangered his soul. His virtue was vehemently and perseveringly assailed.

Everything combined to give all but irresistible force to the assault. Its nature, so adapted to the passions of youth; its source, a person who by her favour could aid his promotion, or by her malignity, which was sure to be roused by disappointment and resentment, could ensure his ruin; its secresy, which would cover the crime from every spectator, but that One who is the witness of all deeds; its repetition, carried forward from time to time; its violence, as if she would carry her purpose by assault; all rendered it everything but certain that Joseph's integrity must yield. Who does not tremble for him? Who would not tremble more for himself in such a case? His destiny is suspended upon the manner in which he meets that fierce assault. If he fall, he will in all probability never rise. But if he stand, he will in all probability never fall. If he resist, he is safe for ever after. If he consent, one criminal act will lead to another, till he becomes an abandoned profligate. A first wrong step will render all wrong afterwards, and be an entrance on the road to ruin. Yes, there are cases in most men's moral history, when their whole character and destiny depend upon their decision regarding one single act. Joseph was victorious. Wonderful! How was this triumph of virtue over vice, of youthful innocence over all but irresistible temptation, achieved? First, by a deep sense of honour. He replied to the seductress, "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he (my master) kept anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife." Shall I thus abuse his confidence and requite his kindness? Noble youth! All generations since have done thee honour! But whence this delicate sense of

honour? From infidelity? No; for David Hume taught that adultery was but a little thing if known, and if unknown, nothing. Infidelity? Where is the infidel who would not have laughed at the squeamishness of a conscience which would have hesitated in such a situation as this? No, it was religion that made Joseph virtuous in himself and honourable to his master; for he immediately added, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" Yes, that was his safeguard. All guards but one were absent, and that One, though invisible to sense, now stood revealed to the eye of his faith in this most perilous hour of his existence, and threw over him the shield of omnipotence, which averted the shafts of the tempter, preserved his chastity unsullied, and inspired deep abhorrence of the sin to which he was so perilously exposed. Yes; it was his religion, his realizing sense of the Divine presence, that in this crisis of his history determined the purpose that saved him from ruin. He acted under the potent and protecting influence of the consideration, "Thou, God, seest me:" and endured as seeing him who is invisible. How solemn a reflection,

> "Within thy circling power I stand,
> On every side I find thy hand;
> Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
> I am surrounded still with God.
> O may these thoughts possess my breast,
> Where'er I roam, where'er I rest,
> Nor let my weaker passions dare
> Consent to sin, for God is there."

Young Men away from home, removed from beneath the vigilant eye of parental superintendence, and exposed to temptations of this or any other kind,

look to the power which preserved Joseph, and which can preserve you also. See where your strength, your safety, and your happiness lie. There are temptations so strong, so violent, so fascinating to our corrupt nature, that all other restraints but those of true piety will be swept away before them, like cobwebs or chaff by the force of a tempest. It is beautifully said of the good man, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Seek this support, guidance, and protection, and you will be safe and happy in dangers as imminent as those which hung over this holy and honourable man.

Voluptuous and profligate youth, votary of licentious pleasures, thou that deridest the prudish scruples of Joseph, place thyself in imagination on the bed of death, at the judgment seat, on the brink of the fathomless abyss of punishment. Through the flames of the bottomless pit seek those persons of whose crimes thou hast been the witness, the accomplice, perhaps the author. Behold the pleasures of a moment succeeded by the sufferings of eternity. Or look up into heaven, where the present mortification of sin is followed by everlasting ages of holiness without effort, and happiness without alloy, and say which thou wilt then wish thou hadst chosen on earth, the love of sinful pleasure, or the love of the holy God.

There is another momentous lesson to be learnt by the young, and indeed by all, from the conduct of Joseph in this assault; and that is that while some temptations are boldly to be encountered and resolutely overcome, there are others only to be conquered by flight, and to be disarmed by removing to a distance.

Joseph fled from the company and solicitations of this shameless woman. He that carries gunpowder about him should not stay and endeavour to protect himself from the fire, but should instantly get as far from it as he can. So should it be in many cases of temptation; to parley is to be in danger, to listen is to be in jeopardy, to linger is to fall. He that enters with his eyes open into temptation, or remains in it voluntarily, is already vanquished.

As Potiphar's wife could not corrupt Joseph's virtue, she determined to blast his reputation and effect his ruin, and brought forward the memorial of her shame as the proof of his guilt. Appearances were unquestionably against him, and show how even the most spotless purity may sometimes be slandered amidst circumstances calculated to excite suspicion, and may for awhile lie under the imputation of crime. "And here again," says an author, "we have a fresh instance of his greatness of mind. He chooses rather to incur his master's groundless displeasure, and to sink under the weight of a false accusation, than to vindicate his own honour by exposing the shame of a bad woman; and he leaves the clearing up of his character, and the preservation of his life, to that God with whom he had entrusted still higher concerns, those of his immortal soul. And thus the least assuming, the shamefaced, feminine virtues, temperance, and chastity, and innocence, and self-government, are found in company with the most manly, the heroic qualities, intrepidity, constancy, and contempt of death." This is very finely put, but it is not quite certain that the silence of the historian proves also

Joseph's silence in defence of himself; nor is it quite clear that either a chivalrous feeling or trust in God should have made him willing to bow down to such an accusation. Perhaps however he saw that as he could bring no witnesses, and the matter rested wholly between himself and his tempter, it was useless to reveal the facts, and better to leave his vindication to the providence of God, who would bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day.

Joseph was imprisoned, but he was infinitely happier there, with his smiling conscience, than was his slanderer amidst all the luxuries of her mansion, tormented as she must have been by her own reflections. No place is frightful to a good man but the dungeon of an ill conscience. Free from that, Joseph is at large though in prison. Nor can any place be pleasant to one tormented with remorse: that will convert a paradise into hell. Here again, in this seemingly hard condition, we see Joseph maintaining his self-respect, his confidence in God, his benevolent activity, his obliging disposition, and his general good conduct. By this course of action he subdued even his jailor, and conciliated the friendship and affection of one who may be supposed, from his occupation, not to have possessed the gentlest nature. He made friends everywhere, and of everybody, but her whose favours would have been his ruin. This was accomplished by the union in his character of piety, general excellence, a cheerful disposition, and an obliging demeanour. The same course will be followed in other cases with the same effect.

While suffering unjustly in prison, the inspiration of God came upon him in the interpretation of the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officers, and this, after two weary years of ungrateful and criminal forgetfulness on the part of one of them, led to his liberation. But in this ingratitude of the chief butler we see the Providence of God, for had he spoken earlier of the poor captive whom he ought to have remembered, the king might have given Joseph his liberty; but probably none of the events which followed would then have taken place, and to have been numbered among the wise men of the land might have been the greatest honour to which he attained. How conspicuously Providence appears in all these incidents! The envy of Joseph's brethren, the lasciviousness of his mistress, the misconduct and dreams of his fellow-prisoners, and the ingratitude of one of them, all bad in themselves, yet all meeting, strange to think, in one point, the elevation of Joseph to be the second in all the land of Egypt, inferior to the king alone. Remove one link, and the chain is broken. God is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

The dreams of Pharaoh, and their interpretation by Joseph, under inspiration by God, made way, not only for his liberation, but for his advancement to the highest dignity which the monarch could bestow, next to the crown. Instead of the fetters which bound him, he receives Pharaoh's ring of office. Instead of his prison clothes he was dressed in the fine linen of Egypt, worn only by the great. Instead of the confinement of a prison he dwells in a palace. Instead of being the servant of a jailor he is first minister of a

monarch, never appearing in public but to be seen in a chariot of state, preceded by a herald calling upon the people to bow the knee. A change so sudden, a transition so great, an elevation so lofty, usually intoxicates the mind, corrupts the heart, and mars the character. It had not this effect upon our true hero. Joseph's dignity, his courage, his humility, his clemency, on this trying occasion, were astonishing, and are all to be traced up to his piety, which dictated and produced them, and caused him to maintain, when the prime minister of state, the same fidelity and prudence which he exhibited in the house of Potiphar and in the prison. His holy excellences, as the circle of his influence widened, increased their power and multiplied their effects, till they pervaded the greater sphere as completely as they had done the less. Potiphar's base and flagitious wife, his tempter and calumniator, the ungrateful butler, his own wicked and murderous brethren, were all now at his mercy; he had an arm long enough to reach, and strong enough to crush them all; but with generosity untinctured by a single particle of malice or resentment, he determined that the sun of his glory should shine forth without a spot. "Joseph was but thirty years old when he became the prime minister of Pharaoh; seventeen of which had been spent under the wing of a fond indulgent parent; and the other thirteen, at that period when the heart is most devoted to pleasure, he had lingered away in all the variety of human wretchedness, but in all the dignity of virtue, all the superiority of wisdom, all the delights, pure and sublime, of true piety: and now, at an age when most

men are only beginning to reflect and act as reasonable beings, we see him raised, not by accident nor cabal, nor by petulance, but by undisputed merit, to a situation which one part of mankind look up to with desire, another with awe, and a third with despair. See him, young men, now as a minister of Pharaoh, serving his royal master, during the years of famine and plenty, with a zeal surpassed only by his honesty. What an opportunity did he now possess to amass for himself, by selfishness and peculation, incalculable wealth! But his fidelity was as signal and illustrious as his situation. He has been blamed by some for taking advantage of the famine, first to impoverish and then to enslave the Egyptians. I have not time to examine this charge at any length, nor to enter minutely into the circumstances of this part of his conduct: and perhaps we may not be able to come to any satisfactory conclusion upon it, for want of more information than is contained in the Scriptural account. There are some expositors who are of opinion that there was nothing in this transaction which reflects discredit on Joseph's character. That he had no selfish view is evident; and as regards Pharaoh, it must be borne in mind, the government of Egypt, before the famine, was despotic and arbitrary. If there were in this affair nothing but a display of ministerial adroitness, in ungenerously employing his superior skill and address in planning or carrying out a system of despotism, let it be viewed as a dark spot on the disc of his glory. But it is believed by many that this was not the case: and it is said, in his defence, that it is clear that after the expiration of the famine, he restored to

the people their lands and their liberties, upon condition of their paying to the king, for the purpose of government, a fifth part of their produce, which was a kind of corn tax in lieu, it should seem, of arbitrary exactions, and was a tax which in that fertile country they could easily pay. That Joseph was not an oppressor is evident from the sentiments of gratitude which the Egyptians expressed, "Thou hast saved our lives;" and from the veneration and love with which his memory has ever been cherished among them. Instead of enslaving the people, he was the first, say his defenders, that in Egypt limited the power of the crown, settling by a formal ordinance, that portion which alone the king could touch.

Before we pass on, let us just pause for a moment to mark the changeful condition of man upon earth. Compare, or rather contrast, the situation of Joseph now, as prime minister of Egypt, and second only to Pharaoh himself, with his condition as first the slave and afterwards the prisoner of Potiphar. How soon may the most brilliant scene be enveloped in the darkest clouds, and the calm be succeeded by the storm: on the other hand, how soon may the dark clouds roll off and exhibit the orb of day in more than previous splendour, and the storm give way to a brighter and sweeter calm! Amidst such vicissitudes, let us indulge neither a careless and confident security in prosperity, nor a settled and gloomy despondency in adversity; but seek that true piety and that humble trust in God which will preserve us in cheerful and tranquil equanimity of mind, and make us feel independent in one condition and hopeful in the other.

We now turn from Joseph as prime minister of state, to contemplate his conduct as a brother and a son. I do not profess to be able to explain how it came to pass that all this while he made no inquiries after his father and brethren. There is a chasm here which I cannot fill up. That it arose neither from resentment nor alienation, seems evident from his subsequent conduct. Perhaps he thought he could not communicate the details of his history without inflicting a deeper wound upon his father's heart, by an account of the unworthiness of his other sons, than could be healed by the information of his own life and elevation. Or God, whose counsel he sought in all his ways, may have given him an express revelation, directing him at what time and in what manner to make himself known to his family. For the account of Joseph's conduct to his brethren, I refer you to the inimitably touching narrative preserved in the book of Genesis. To many readers doubtless there will appear to be a somewhat unseemly sporting with their feelings, a want of sincerity in the disguise he assumed and the accusations he preferred, and a degree of profanity in the somewhat heathen language which, in one or two instances, he employed. I will not contend that in all his conduct he was perfectly blameless. There may have been spots in his character, and after comparing it very closely with Scripture, some may be discovered; and we must disapprove of what is wrong wherever and in whomsoever it is found. Sacred history exhibits its characters just as they were, not in all respects as they should have been. Dark spots are more easily discovered upon the whitest gar-

ments, and foul blemishes in the fairest reputations. There were, however, obvious reasons for the general conduct of Joseph. He knew the former wicked character of his brethren, and had experienced their murderous cruelty towards himself; and as he very likely foresaw that this interview and renewed intercourse might lead to their coming down and settling in Egypt, he wished to ascertain how far their present character would, from its improvement, warrant his encouraging such a step. What might appear to some as unnecessary cruelty, was therefore in his intention the wisdom and severity of love. It was as the test of fire to the metal, to prove of what sort it was. He wanted to know how far they repented of their sin towards himself, and he therefore placed himself in a position to ascertain that, a position in which he could look into their hearts, without discovering his own. His love yearned over them, and he longed to tell them how fully and freely he forgave them; but with a prudence and strength of mind which proved not only how good, but how wise and great he was, he laid a stern restraint upon his feelings till the proper moment of disclosure arrived, and the end of postponing it had been fully answered. The whole scene is of such exquisite pathos, as is not to be equalled in the creations of fiction.

At length the full evidence of contrition and amendment having been obtained, and the purpose of his disguise having been accomplished, his heart could endure no longer the torture of concealment; the pathetic speech of Judah, the sight of his own beloved brother Benjamin, the frequent mention of his father's

name, raised such a torrent of filial and fraternal love in his soul that he suddenly lets fall the mask, and exclaims, "I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?" Who can describe, who can imagine, their feelings at this discovery? If they had in his early life actually put him to death, and his ghost had now started up before them, their feelings could not have been greatly different. A little mind might have enjoyed the triumph which he had now gained over those who once hated him. He saw their distress, he beheld them dumb with amazement, petrified with terror, tortured with apprehension, and he instantly dissipated their fears; calmed their perturbation; became their apologist, instead of their accuser; and directed their attention to that Providence which had over-ruled their conduct, not only to procure his advancement, but also for the preservation of the lives of thousands. A less generous, noble, and delicate mind, would have talked much of his forgiving them, but he entreats them to forgive themselves.

Revengeful and implacable men, whom the least offence inflames, who never forgive an injury incomparably less than that committed against Joseph; who with a serpentine cunning, a blood-hound scent, and a leonine ferocity, pursue the object of your malice, and at last take a demon-like pleasure in his tortures as he writhes under the inflictions of your revenge, how little, how contemptible, you appear, when compared with this hero of fraternal love! Pause, young men, upon this instance, and say if there is not more true greatness in this act of forgiveness than in all the sanguinary heroes of history or romance.

You have seen Joseph as a brother, now contemplate him once more as a son; I say once more, for we have already seen him in his youthful days, the comfort of his father's declining years. The boy has become a man, the man has become illustrious, and the illustrious man has become the minister of a foreign court; and does he still remember and love his father, the old shepherd of Canaan? Has filial piety outlived his injuries, his changes, his reverses, his elevation? Or, has Joseph wished and contrived, amidst his brilliant fortunes, to forget the hoary patriarch? Again, I say, read the beautiful history, and see how this best of sons shall answer, by his own conduct, this question. How abrupt the transition in that gush of feeling! "I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live?" How beautiful the exhortation, "Ye shall tell my father all my glory." How exquisite the admonition, "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him: Thus saith thy son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down; tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children's children, and all that thou hast, and there will I nourish thee. Ye shall haste and bring down my father hither."

The joyful news being conveyed to Jacob, he immediately removed with all his family to Egypt. I attempt not to describe the raptures of that interview, when father and son, clasped in each other's arms, found not only words, but tears and sobs, too weak to express the overwhelming ecstacies of the scene, and that moment in which Jacob could find nothing better fitted to give

utterance to his emotion than this: "Now let me die, since I have seen the face of my son." Would you behold the greatest triumph and the richest trophy of filial love, turn to that glorious spectacle, when the prime minister of Egypt, the man next to Pharaoh himself, led the poor old shepherd of Canaan, leaning upon his arm, into the palace, and before the whole circle of courtiers, introduced him to the monarch, exultingly exclaiming, "My father." "O nature, nature! How honourable thy empire, how glorious thy triumphs!" There may be a more splendid example of filial love than this, but I know not where to find it. While Joseph was indulging in all this luxury of affection for his father, he did not forget his brethren; and though encircled with the splendours of a court, and invested with its richest honours, he was not ashamed to own as his brothers those whose occupation was odious in the estimation of the Egyptians, and to regard as his greatest distinction, his descent from the herdsman who was the friend of God.

Here, young men, is the example of a son, which I commend most earnestly and affectionately to your attention and imitation. Be each of you a good son, not only in youth, but in manhood, and as long as the old man, your father, lives. There can be no moral excellence where filial piety is wanting. You cannot love your Heavenly Father, if you do not love your earthly one. In the sterile ground where this virtue grows not, nothing good can grow except a few miserable weeds. Let it be to you a matter of tender solicitude and constant vigilance that all your conduct may

be such as to give comfort to your father's heart. Ask how everything will affect his peace, and thus imbibe the spirit of the noble Epaminondas, who being asked what he esteemed the happiest circumstance of his life, replied, "That my father and mother were living when I gained the victory of Leuctra." Or if you want a more modern instance of strong filial affection, take Dr. Samuel Johnson's example, borrowing, in his extreme poverty, six guineas, to comfort the death bed of his poor dying mother, and paying the expenses of her funeral with the proceeds of the sale of the manuscript of "Rasselas." And especially remember the solemn and incumbent duty of maintaining this affection through every change of circumstances. Some have dropt their affections for their relatives as they rose in life, and having arrived at wealth and worldly honour, have blushed to own the connections whom they left below. I can conceive of cases in which virtue itself may make a son blush to own his father; I mean when the wretched parent has, by his misconduct, not only disgraced himself, but his family; but for a child to be ashamed of a father, simply on account of his poverty, is a disposition of which it is difficult to say which is the greatest, the meanness, the folly, the cruelty, or the wickedness; it is, however, enough to say, it is a compound of all those detestable ingredients.

I hasten to contemplate the closing scenes of Joseph's history. He had welcomed his aged father to Egypt, and by dutiful and loving behaviour had so cheered his latter days, and had crowned his hoary head with such glory and honour, as during the seventeen years that

Jacob enjoyed his son's society, must have almost obliterated his recollection of his past deep sorrows. Joseph had settled his brethren in Goshen, and lived beloved and respected by them. Pharaoh and his court continued to him their confidence, and the Egyptians their gratitude and veneration. Jacob at length died, and Joseph gave proof that neither his sensibilities as a man, nor his piety as a believer in God, had been dried up under the tropical sun of his wonderful prosperity. He fell on the lifeless corpse of his father, wept and kissed him. It was Jacob's dying request to be buried not in Egypt, but in the land of Canaan; a request that expressed his faith in the promise of God, which ensured the possession of this country to his descendants. This request was most scrupulously complied with by Joseph, and, to do honour to his father's memory, he followed his remains to Canaan, accompanied in the funeral procession by a retinue suited to his high rank as the prime minister of Pharaoh.

It now remained to be proved, as Joseph's brethren thought, whether his forgiveness had been granted to them out of mere respect to their father, or from the generous impulse of his own feelings. They first sent therefore to implore his pardon in the most supplicating terms, enforcing their request by the sacred name of his father, and his father's God; and then came and prostrated themselves before him, thus fulfilling the dreams of his youth, which had excited their envy and hatred. They knew not, even yet, the depths of his generosity, and formed their opinion of him from themselves. He wept over their submission, cheered them

with assurances of his continued kindness, and said to them "Fear not, for I am in the place of God! But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good. Now, therefore, fear not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." Noble-minded Joseph! What a brother! What a beautiful example of holy charity.

Joseph lived fifty-four years after this, and year succeeded year with undiminished splendour, but the events of his life which were to interest and instruct all ages were over, and his remaining history is comprised in a few sentences. He diffused happiness around him, and saw his father's house and his own descendants greatly multiplied. But as neither station, nor power, nor wealth, nor piety, nor all these combined, can preserve from the stroke of death, Joseph laid down his honours at the feet of the king of terrors, and was gathered to his fathers. "Grief finds a cure, usefulness a period, glory a decay, and pride a destroyer, in the grave." So he found it. The piety which had been the guide of his youth, the guard of his middle life, and the prop of his old age, sustained him to the last, and he died with firm faith in the promise of God, requesting that his bones might be preserved in order that they might be carried to Canaan, whenever the Lord should visit his people, and restore them to the land of promise. This request, similar in nature and design to that of his father, like that was sacredly fulfilled; for when the Israelites, nearly two centuries afterwards, left Egypt, notwithstanding the hurried

circumstances of their flight, they repaired to his sepulchre, exhumed his bones, carried them with them, as a precious legacy, amidst all their wanderings in the wilderness, and at length interred them in that sacred spot, where already reposed the dust of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the character of Joseph is a deeply interesting one, and combines the sobriety of truth with the charms of fiction. The variety of incident, the scenes of true pathos, the constant vicissitudes, the vivid contrasts of character, the unexpected turns of fortune, the struggles with temptation of exalted piety, and the signal victories of truth and virtue, the workings of the various passions and the play of the diversified affections of humanity, together with the intermixture of supernatural interposition with the ordinary courses of nature and events which it contains, all invest the history with a fascination which nothing can surpass. Every one who has ever read it has confessed its power. "The peasant and the philosopher," it has been truly said, "the child and the adult, the believer and the infidel, the men of all nations and all ages, have admired, delighted in, and been edified by, a story, which, clothed with all the graces of eloquence, conveys the purest and sublimest lessons of piety and morality."

This is a real history, and not a fiction. I do not deny that good examples which are merely the creations of genius and the offspring of imagination have some power over the mind; or that truth and holiness, when portrayed in fictitious narratives, may inspire

affection and stimulate imitation; but they are far inferior in power to facts. Whatever effect such exhibitions of virtue and vice may have, it is weakened, both at the time and in recollection, by a secret whisper, "It is all unreal." The perusal of such descriptions however strongly it may excite the imagination, has little hold upon the conscience, and is rarely followed by any lasting results upon the character. The effect upon the mind of moral fictions and moral facts respectively, is not unlike that of a picture which is a work of pure fancy as compared with a painting from real life. Now the character of Joseph is a reality.

It is a scriptural character, on which the hand of God has been specially employed, both in its production and in its exhibition. God has not only lavished upon it the riches of his power, wisdom, and grace, in forming and finishing it as one of the most beautiful specimens of his divine art and workmanship; but he has also set it in the gorgeous frame of inspiration, and suspended it in his own Scripture gallery of portraits of holy men of old, where he exhibits it for admiration, and for imitation, as fresh, though now nearly four thousand years old, as when it was just finished by the Divine pencil.

It is a character which countless millions have beheld with admiration, and multitudes of them with anxious, studied, and successful imitation. It has been held up before the youth of all nations and all ages to whom the Bible has gone. How many have been fortified in their struggles against sin, and made victorious over temptation, by the holy exclamation of this noble youth, "How shall I do this great wicked-

ness and sin against God?" It comes therefore to you recommended and sanctioned by the experience of numbers.

The basis of this beautiful specimen of sanctified humanity was laid in true religion. All that lofty and noble structure of excellence which this history exhibits, rose upon the foundation of the belief and fear of God. It began in the house of his father Jacob, while he was yet a boy, and it was on this account that the patriarch cherished the partiality which he so unwisely displayed. Joseph "remembered his Creator in the days of his youth." The fervent, consistent, and triumphant piety which he manifested abroad he gained while under the parental roof. Those seeds of excellence, which grew up and protected and adorned him when a young man from home, were sowed by the hand of his father at home. What security is there for moral excellence without religion, and what security for religion, except it be taken up in youth? It was religion, I repeat emphatically, that was the substratum of all Joseph's excellence.

The character of Joseph is as symmetrical as it is well based. There is a beautiful harmony and proportion in it. You do not see one excellence flourishing amidst many imperfections, like a flower amidst many weeds in a wilderness, but a garden of beautiful plants, all exhibiting their colours and mingling their fragrance; or like a single column rising amidst ruin and surrounding desolation, but a majestic temple, with all its parts in all their orderly arrangement and all their exquisite proportions. Here we see the son,

the brother, the servant, the master, the ruler, each in single and separate excellence, and all combined and harmonised in one glorious and lovely character. Here are no eccentricities, no anomalies, no deficiencies, no extravagances; there is no need to excuse great irregularities in some things by as great excellences in others, no balancing of virtues against vices; but we see admirable consistency, beautiful uniformity; in short, that exquisite completeness which strikes the eye of the observer from whatever point of view it is contemplated. How inflexible was Joseph in temptation; how cheerful and active in adversity; how modest, humble, dignified, and holy in prosperity! In him were united the sagacity of the statesman, the penetration of the prophet, the firmness of the believer, and the purity of the saint. Goodness came first, greatness followed; and the former remaining uncorrupted by the latter, was heightened by it like a jewel set in gold.

Young men, what a character is here; how worthy of your study! It sets forth to you the dangers which you may have to encounter from excessive parental indulgence, from injurious treatment, from living away from home in a corrupt state of society, from violent and unexpected temptation, from being entrusted with the interests of others, from coming into possession of great wealth, exalted station, and public honour. What a host of perils! And here you learn in Joseph's piety, meekness, integrity, diligence, economy, dignity, sympathy, forgiveness, filial regard, and dependence upon God, the many excellences you should imitate; and the means by which those perils

are to be vanquished. Nor less strikingly do you see in his end the rewards that follow a holy and virtuous life; you see virtue crowned with safety, with peace, with riches, with honour, with usefulness, with heaven.

It is possible that curiosity may lead some of the parents of the youths who may purchase this volume to look through its pages; and should this be the case let the following remarks arrest their attention.

How momentous a duty it is, on their part, to give sound religious instruction to their children at the earliest period in which they can receive it, and to endeavour by the most judicious, affectionate, and persevering methods, to form their character by religion!

Of what great consequence it is, in order to promote the peace of families, to avoid the manifestation of partiality for any one child, by any unwise marks of distinction.

Parents, you know not how early your children will be removed from you, and this is an additional motive to train them up in the fear of God, that they may leave home fortified by true piety, to encounter the temptations of the world, and to endure the trials of life.

It may be that a child long lost to you may be restored under circumstances of such delight as more than to compensate for his absence, and your suspense concerning him. The pious son, removed from your family at a tender age, and for a long time having no share in your affairs, may prove to be the main pillar of your house, when there is no other person to prevent its fall.

It is possible, and even probable, that the piety of

one child may become in following years the means of reformation and conversion to many others in your family, who had neglected pious instructions in their early years, and fallen into the ways of vice and wickedness.

Many a parent whose heart was at one time well-nigh broken by the circumstances of his family, has lived to see the tide of his domestic sorrow turned, and has ended a cloudy and stormy day by a calm and beautiful sunset.

A pious child is a father's best companion, next to God himself, amidst the infirmities of old age, and in the chamber of sickness and death.

But it is you, my young friends, and you especially, Young Men, who should consider this history. Often peruse the history as it is recorded in the book of Genesis. It is of unequalled beauty and pathos. Give yourself time to study it, and seek grace to imitate it, as far as the principles on which it is founded, and the virtues which compose it, shall apply to your own circumstances. And when you have thus studied it for its importance, admired it for his beauty, and copied it for your own advantage, ascend from it to the contemplation of that still more glorious, perfect, and august example which is given us in our Lord Jesus Christ, of whose personal history it furnishes, though not perhaps a type, yet a parallelism, which is most singularly striking. Joseph envied by his brethren, sold into Egypt, degraded to the condition of a servant, exalted from the dungeon to the neighbourhood of the throne, invested with power, drawing his perishing kindred to him, and bestowing upon them

a possession in the best of the land, at any rate reminds us of Him, if it does not actually prefigure Him, who was hated by the Jews, sold by one of his apostles, crucified by the Romans, and having thus been made of no reputation, was in the end raised from the cross to a throne above the skies. Behold Him ascending on high; receiving gifts for men, attracting millions to Him for salvation, and conferring upon them an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Thus unite the Old and New Testament histories, and combine in yourselves the character of Joseph with the mind of Jesus.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS RECOMMENDED.

The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel.

To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.

To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity.

To give subtility to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. PROVERBS i, 1-4.

IN the subject we have now to consider, we have another proof and illustration of the opening sentiment of the last chapter; I mean the variety, beauty, and usefulness of the Holy Scriptures. In that chapter we saw and felt the fascination of sacred narrative; in this we shall see no less prominently, and feel, I hope, no less powerfully, the value of Scripture Proverbs; and if that presented to us a chain of gold, in which each event was a distinct link, yet all were so conjoined as to form a complete ornament, this will present a string of the richest pearls, of which each by itself is a separate and valuable jewel.

Proverbs are short sentences containing a maxim of wisdom, or expressing an instructive truth or fact ascer-

tained by experience or observation: shrewd rules for practical life, meaning more than the mere words express. They have ever been favourite vehicles of instruction, especially in countries of little civilization, where books are few or unknown, and men depend for their knowledge upon tradition. Among such people this method is more likely to produce effect than any other, for it assumes, as Bishop Lowth remarks, not to argue or persuade, but to dictate. In order to render their precepts more pleasing, as well as more powerful, the instructors of mankind have ever illustrated them by metaphors, comparisons, and other embellishments. Proverbs prevailed much among the Hebrews, and continued to the latest ages of their literature. But they have also been adopted by people far advanced in refinement; indeed, by all nations upon earth. The prevailing characteristics of a good proverb, are brevity, that it may be easily remembered; point, that it may stimulate; and elegance, that it may please. And how all these apply to the Proverbs of Solomon you know full well. Let us then enter on a consideration of this admirable portion of Holy Scripture.

I. We will consider its author. It opens with ascribing this honour to Solomon. The tradition of the Jews represents him as having written the Canticles in youth, and the Book of Proverbs in middle life, and it considers the Book of Ecclesiastes to be his confession as a penitent, mourning over his early, dark, and winding aberrations from the path of truth and holiness. Several of the sages, or wise men, of Greece, were rendered illustrious by a few well-known maxims; but though posterior to Solomon, how limited in this

respect was their wisdom to that which blazed forth from the wonderful genius of him, "to whom God gave wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled all the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt; and his fame was in all nations round about: and he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five." Considering the early age of the world in which he lived, he was probably the most extraordinary genius that ever appeared on earth. "Magnificence was his identifying attribute. And alas, alas, for the weakness of humanity, the dangers of knowledge, and the pride of intellect, wealth, and power, even when he sinned, as most awfully he did, it was with a high hand, on a large scale, and with a kind of royal gusto; he did not, like common sinners, sip at the cup of corruption, but drank of it 'deep and large,' emptying it to the dregs: and when he suffered, his groans seemed to be those of a demigod in torment. He stood like a pyramid, the shadow he cast in one direction was equal to the light he received in the other. An example his which proves that any great disproportion between gifts and graces, renders the former as fatal as a knife is to the suicide, or the power of writing to the forger. We ardently hope that Solomon became a true penitent. But if he did not, his writings so far from losing their value, would gain new force; the figure of their fallen author would form a striking frontispiece, and those solemn warnings would receive an amen, as from the caves of perdition. A slain Solomon! since fell Lucifer the son of the morning, what more im-

pressive proof of the power of evil." * It is clear, from information contained in the book itself, that Solomon did not publish the whole during his life. The latter part from the twenty-fifth chapter, forming an appendix, was collected after his death, and added to what appears to have been more immediately arranged by himself. What a production of one mind! And when we add to this the book of Ecclesiastes, we stand amazed at the intellect which could have poured forth such a fund of practical wisdom.

Of the Divine authority of this book, as a part of the inspired canon, there can exist no doubt. It is frequently quoted in the New Testament, and was evidently considered by the apostles as a treasure of revealed morality. Such, indeed, it is; a mine of divine wisdom, which may be ever explored and worked without being ever exhausted. What Cicero said of Thucydides applies far more truly to this work of Solomon, it is so full of matter that it comprises as many sentences as words.

II. It will help you, my young friends, better to understand this book, if you consider its scope and design. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But this is a description of the Bible as a whole, and not of each separate part. One portion may be more full of doctrine, and therefore more important in reference to this than some others. Another portion may relate more specifically to practice, and

* Gilfillan's "Bards of the Bible."

have more value as a rule of conduct, than those which speak only of doctrine. We go for information concerning the person, mission, and work of Christ, and the way of pardon and salvation, to the prophecies of Isaiah in the Old Testament, and to the Gospels and Epistles of the apostles in the New Testament; but the book of Proverbs, while it supplies us with no information, or but a dim light, on those momentous topics, furnishes us with invaluable rules for our conduct in this life. The beauty, force, and value of these admirable maxims lie in their practical design and character. If we had no other book of Scripture than this, we should in vain seek here for a solution of the problem, "How shall man be just with God?" or for an answer to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" But thanks be to God, we have other portions of Holy Writ, and having learnt in them how as sinners we are to be justified, and our peace with God is to be obtained, we come back to this, as well as to others, to learn how the pardoned and regenerated man is to conduct himself in all his various relations, situations, and circumstances. It is wholly a practical book, and teaches us to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present evil world." Nor is this to be thought a low matter to be embraced in a Divine revelation. The truth as it is in Jesus is "a doctrine according to godliness." Holy living is the end of all truth: "Sanctify them," prayed our Lord for his apostles, "by Thy truth." The grand scope of the Proverbs is (and can God propose, or man conceive, a higher?) to explain the nature of true wisdom; to show its im-

portance; to demonstrate its necessity; to urge its acquisition; and to enforce its practice.

How lofty a place among the objects of human pursuit has been assigned to wisdom! What a stir in the world of mind has that word made through all ages, from the history of Egypt to that of Greece! All the most gifted intellects of antiquity started in quest of this most precious acquisition. Every country was visited, every oracle consulted, every source of information explored by them, to find out wisdom. Yet all men have searched in vain, as long as the enquiry was conducted by unaided reason. When Pythagoras was complimented by the tyrant of Syracuse as the wise man, he modestly refused the flattery, declaring that he was not the possessor of wisdom, but only its lover seeking after it, a philosopher. You may see this subject finely illustrated in the book of Job, where, in one of the sublimest chapters (the twenty-eighth) of that wonderfully sublime portion of Scripture, we find the question proposed for the solution of the universe, "Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?" And when man through ignorance is silent, and the depth says, It is not in me; and death and destruction reply that they have only heard the fame thereof; then God comes forth from his pavilion of darkness as the divine teacher of wisdom. And what is it that, after all the researches, and opinions, and conflicting systems of philosophers, He proclaims to be true wisdom? Not some profound secret of nature which had baffled the inquiries of philosophers. Not some great principle of political science which was to regulate the

affairs and change the destinies of empires. Not some new theory of public economics, which was to direct the stream of commerce and open new sources of wealth to the nations. No: these were not the communications most suited to the exigencies of our nature: "To man he saith, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." It requires a revelation from God to settle this question, "What is wisdom?" and he has settled it once and for ever. This wisdom is Religion. This is man's highest wisdom as a rational, moral, and immortal creature. It is his wisdom on earth, and will be his wisdom in heaven. It is his wisdom in time, and will be his wisdom through all eternity. Philosophers of every country, hear it! Shades of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, hear it! Divines and moralists, hear it! And ye, young men, the objects of my solicitude and my address, hear it! "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." This is the subject and design of the Book of Proverbs; it is ever recurring to the glorious theme, and again and again personifies wisdom and represents her disclosing her nature and teaching her lessons, in piety towards God, and all the moralities, charities, amenities, and courtesies of social and domestic life. Here the basis of all sound morality is laid in the fear of God. On this broad, deep foundation of religion, is raised a superstructure of morals, which combines the duties and the excellences of the good monarch, the good subject, the good neighbour, the good master, the good husband, the good son, the good servant.

III. It may help you better to understand this extraordinary book if you are enabled to perceive the parts into which it is divided; and which, though not noticeable at a superficial glance, do yet really exist. These parts are three. The first includes the first nine chapters, in which wisdom, or the practical knowledge of God, is set forth with great copiousness and variety of expression, as the only source and foundation of true virtue and happiness. This portion seems to be principally addressed to, and intended for, youth. The sins, temptations, and dangers, incident to this period of life, are exhibited in the most striking descriptions and the most glowing colours. All the beauties of diction and metaphor, all the charms of eloquence and the ornaments of poetry, all the persuasion of tenderness, all the expostulations of love, and all the commands of authority, are employed to induce the young man to turn away from sin and to practise holiness. * This part may be designated "A manual for youth."

The second part extends from the tenth to the end of the twenty-fourth chapter, and comprises precepts which seem intended for those who have advanced from youth to manhood, and relate to all the duties of social life. Here the transactions of secular business are alluded to, and whatsoever things are true, and just, and honest, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, are stated with a minuteness, and enforced with an earnestness, the most edifying and im-

* Mr Bridges' admirable exposition of the Proverbs supplies a few of the remarks of this chapter.

pressive. This may be called "A directory for the man of business."

The third part begins at the twenty-fifth chapter, and goes on to the end of the book, and contains an appendix of miscellaneous proverbs, collected after Solomon's death. The two last chapters, written very probably by different hands, but under Divine inspiration, and preserved by Divine care, were added to the sacred book. And they may not inappropriately be called "A mirror for females."

IV. But let us enter upon a general (and it can be but general) examination of the contents of this book.

1. I would direct your attention, first of all, to the very appropriate and impressive terms which Solomon has selected under the direction of the Spirit of God, to set forth the principal subjects of the book; I mean Folly and Wisdom. These two words are of course to be understood in a practical sense, as referring to moral rather than intellectual subjects, as designating sin and holiness. By the fool we are to understand the man not of weak understanding, but of bad heart and vicious conduct: and by the wise man, the individual not of large knowledge, but of genuine religion. It is true in many places, the words, wisdom and folly are employed by the sacred writers to denote the possession or the want of some specific excellence, but for the most part they have the generic meanings of religion and wickedness. This is plain from that admirable definition, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and from that other text of an opposite nature, "Fools make a mock at sin." All sin is not only wicked, it is foolish also; and every sinner,

whatever may be his intellectual attainments, is not only a transgressor, but a fool. Nothing is considered more reproachful than this appellation; hence many, more jealous for their intellect than for their heart, would rather be called knaves than fools. Sin then, is folly; it is declared so by God; it is thought so by all holy angels and men; and is proved to be so by the experience of mankind, in the consequences of poverty, disease, shame, and misery, which it often brings after it in this world, and the certain destruction with which it is followed in the world to come. Look at the prodigal, wasting his substance among harlots and in riotous living, the idle profligate, the extravagant spendthrift, the besotted drunkard, the diseased debauchee, the dishonest servant, the maddened gamester, how wicked is their conduct, yes, and how foolish also! Is it not folly to wage war against heaven, to contend with the Almighty; to barter away the joys of immortality for the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season; and for the gratification of a moment to incur the bitter pains of eternal death? On the other hand, if there be holiness in religion, there is also wisdom. To secure the favour of God; to be saved by Christ; to have a title to eternal glory; to have peace of conscience; to control the passions; to be comforted in sorrow; to secure the germ of every virtue, and the death of every corruption; in short, to be wise unto salvation hereafter, and to have that which will best promote all our interests here, is to be wise indeed. This is the truest, the noblest, the only wisdom. What is the wisdom displayed in amassing wealth, acquiring fame, or gratifying appetite, compared with this?

Surely that must be the deepest folly which ruins estate, body, and soul, and that the highest wisdom which saves them all.

2. I next select a few single proverbs for the sake of holding them up and showing their beauty and their value. But I can only pluck a few flowers at random from a garden enlivened by the bloom, and perfumed with the odour, of a thousand others, as beautiful and fragrant as those I gather. How tender, how lovely, or how wise are such sayings as these: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "The memory of the just is blessed." "The mouth of the righteous is a well of life." "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy." "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." "Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith." "The beginning of strife is as the letting out of water; therefore leave off contention before it is meddled with." "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." "A foolish son is the grief of his father, and bitterness to her that bare him." "Open rebuke is better than secret love." Such are but specimens, taken almost indiscriminately from this vast and all but inexhaustible storehouse of wisdom. What mind of the least perception or taste

must not, does not, admire the point and the elegance of these beautiful aphorisms? I can only allude to the principal topics on which the wisdom of Solomon was employed in this collection of golden sentences. Here are innumerable sayings on all the duties of religion towards God; on filial affection; on the right use of speech and the government of the tongue; on ability, diligence, industry, honesty, and honour in business; on prudence in domestic affairs; on friendship and companionship; on forethought and anticipation of the future; on contracts and suretyship; on the obligations of kings and subjects, of husbands and wives, of masters and servants: yea, what subject is there connected with social existence, not only in its greater concerns, but in all its minute and delicate ramifications, in reference to which we may not find some sententious remark, some pithy saying, which, if remembered, would be of vast service to us? Rules for the house of God, for our habitations, for the shop, the parlour, and even the kitchen, may all be found here. The character of every individual, whatever be his rank, station, or social relation, may find a mould here in which it may be cast, and from which it would come forth beautiful, useful, and admirable.

3. But leaving particular and isolated proverbs, I go on to select and exhibit a few of the beautiful allegories, or perhaps more properly, personifications, which are scattered over this wondrous book. Metaphors and similes abound, in seemingly grand and endless confusion, like the single stars of the firmament; while allegories, which are but extended metaphors, are to be seen here and there standing out like magni-

ficent constellations, amidst the single stars. I can mention only two or three of these, for they are too numerous to be all of them considered; as Solomon seems to delight in the use of allegory. And first of all, let me direct your attention to the personification of religion in the first chapter. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words: How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words to you." How finely is this wrought, when religion is thus seen, not retiring to the cloister or to the cell, not even confined to places of worship, but going through the streets, standing in the gates, entering into public assemblies, and delivering her instructions, breathing out her expostulations, urging her counsels, administering her rebukes, and denouncing her threatenings, to the congregated multitudes, the mass of the people.

Nothing can be conceived more apt, more beautiful, or more sublime, than the personification of Wisdom, which he introduces in the eighth chapter, exhibiting her not only as the director of human life and morals, as the inventor of arts, as the dispenser of wealth, of honour, and of real felicity, but as the immortal offspring of the Omnipotent Creator, and as the eternal associate in the Divine Counsels.

> "When he prepared the heavens, I was present;
> When he described a circle on the face of the deep;

When he disposed the atmosphere above;
When he established the fountains on the deep;
When he published his decree to the sea,
That the waters should not pass their bounds;
When he planned the foundations of the earth;
Then was I by him as his offspring:
And I was daily his delight:
I rejoiced continually before him:
I rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth,
And my delights were with the sons of men." *

"It is a difficult thing to personify an attribute well; and to sustain it through a simile or an apostrophe is not easy; but to supply a long monologue for the lips of Eternal Wisdom! This Solomon has done, and not degraded the mighty theme."†

Turn now to another of these beautiful personifications, to one which will come more home to your own condition and circumstances.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding."

"For the merchandise thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."

"She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her."

"Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour."

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

"She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her."

Such, young men, is religion, for wisdom you know is religion, as here set forth by a striking mixture of metaphor. She is represented as a queen coming forth

* Lowth's translation. I must express my conviction that this chapter is intended as a personification of wisdom, and not as a prophetic description of our Lord Jesus Christ.

† Gilfillan.

from her palace and her treasury, with both hands full of blessings, which she is holding out, ready to drop them into the lap of those who will submit to her government, and become her subjects. To represent the influence of religion, even on the interests of earth and time, she is seen holding in one hand health, and in the other riches and honour, which often are the fruits of that godliness which is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. But what are her ways? A lonely rugged path across sandy deserts, or through gloomy passes and frowning precipices, where no verdure springs, no sunbeams play, no birds carol, and where neither streams nor fruits are found! So the enemies of religion, the men who dwell in the fools' paradise, would represent: but how different the description in God's word of Truth! This tells of "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace." It is indeed a narrow and somewhat toilsome way, but every step is lighted by the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness; is strewed with the promises of God; is a step in happiness; and a step to heaven. Yes, even what are called the austerities of religion are more joyous than the pleasures of sin. The yoke of Christ is far lighter than that of Satan. And in the tree of life that wonderful ornament and glory of the garden of Eden, in the branches of which the birds of Paradise sang, whose roots were watered with the rivers of God, in whose shade Adam basked, and of whose fruits he ate as the sacramental pledge of immortality, there, I say, was the emblem of heavenly wisdom. She is a tree of life growing up from a branch brought out of

Eden, when sin had barred our access to the original stock, and caused it to decay; a tree whose branches bend down upon this world of sin and misery, and whose clusters hang within the reach of even the youngest child. Young men, what think you of this beautiful description of wisdom's blessings? It is no fancy picture, no mere creation of human genius, no mere poetic garniture of the page of revelation. How many have proved all this to be a divine reality! O, come, come to this tree of life, and take of its twelve manner of fruits, and live.

I pass by, with only a glance at it, the personification of wisdom in the ninth chapter, building her house, preparing her feast, and sending out her invitations to collect her guests: a beautiful representation of the blessings of true religion.

4. I now turn to a few of those graphic sketches of character with which the book abounds. Scarcely has it opened, before we find the character of the Tempter described in the following language: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not: if they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood; let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as they that go down to the pit; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse." How true this is to the life as a description of the conduct of those who tempt others to evil! The earnest invitation, the secrecy of the plot, the prospect of advantage, the promise of a share in the booty, how accurate! It is true that in your situation and circumstances the

temptation will not be to deeds of blood and rapine; but there will be much the same urgency of enticement, the same promise and prospect of gain, and the same ensnaring representation of companionship. Sinners are ruthless and zealous in the dreadful work of temptation; they want companions to assist them in accomplishing their evil deeds, and sometimes they equally need, and earnestly seek, associates to maintain their courage. Guilt, till its subject becomes hardened and desperate, is cowardly, and gets rid of its fears by multiplying its companions. If sinners, then, entice you, do not yield, or even hearken, to their solicitations. Consent constitutes the sin. Turn a deaf ear to every entreaty. Let no promise or prospect of gain or pleasure induce you to listen for a moment to their solicitations. Flee from them as you would from a serpent or a lion. You need not yield. You cannot be forced to sin. Repulse the tempter at once, and with a frown. Do not parley with him for a moment. His look is the fascination of the basilisk's eye, his words are snares, his breath is pestilence, his presence is destruction. The moment he asks you to sin, flee, instantly flee. And while I warn you against being ensnared by the tempter's arts, let me, with still more emphatic importunity, entreat you never to employ them. No character is so like that of Satan, who is called by way of eminence, the Tempter, as he who entices another to sin. This is the most truly diabolical act ever perpetrated in our world. Turn with horror from the thought. If you must and will sin, sin alone, have no partner in your crime. If you will sink to the bottomless pit, drag no others down with

you into that fiery gulf. Emulate not the fate of Achan, of whom it is said, "This man perished not alone in his iniquity." What an eternity of torment is that man preparing for himself, as well as for others, who is ruining the souls of his fellow-creatures by soliciting them to sin! How will those victims of his wiles avenge themselves upon him by their execrations in the world of woe!

Next I direct you to a very striking description of the tempted. I can only allude, delicacy forbids more, to the vivid description of the unwary youth caught in the snares of the abandoned woman, contained in the seventh chapter. This picture is to be looked at with half-averted eye, for warning only. It is painted with a master's hand, and with exquisite fidelity of colour. Was ever the harlot's likeness more accurately taken? Her sallying forth in quest of her prey in the evening; her unmistakeable dress; her tempting speech; her plausible suggestions; her impudent face; all show the harlot's false and mercenary heart. There is no vice against which you have more need to be warned than sensuality. It is that to which your age, your situation, and your temptations expose you. Imitate the conduct of that noble youth whose character we contemplated in the last chapter, and say, when tempted to sin, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" How true is human nature at all times, even in its corruptions, to itself. The corners of the streets of our modern towns and cities exhibit the same night scenes now, just as those of Solomon's time. Three thousand years, with all their warnings and experience, have not banished the

"strange woman" from society, nor driven the female tempter from our streets. Everything in the description is impressive and instructive. Trace the sad end, as set forth here, to its beginning. Was not idleness the parent of this mischief? The loitering evening walk; the unseasonable hour; the vacant mind; all bringing the youth into contact with evil company. Was not all this courting sin, tempting the tempter? How awfully true the representation of the tempter's success, "He goeth after her straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter," unconscious of his fate; perhaps dreaming of rich pasture; or "as a fool to the correction of the stocks," careless and unfeeling; "till the dart strike through his liver;" or "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." Young men, set a guard upon your senses. Go not in the way of sin. Enter deeply into our Lord's beautiful petition, "Lead us not into temptation." He that would not fall into sin must not go into the way of temptation. Keep from the harlot's company and speech, in her private haunt or public walk, as you would from contact with a person infected with the plague.

I now direct you to the description of the end of the profligate who, after running his course of dissipation, looks back with remorse and regret, amidst poverty and disease, upon his polluted and ruinous career: "And thou mourn at last when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that have instructed me. I was in almost

all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." Here is the fruit of sensuality set forth in awful terms. Disease preying, like worms, upon the body, and remorse, like a vulture, gnawing at the heart. Yes, there are sins which set their loathsome brand upon the outer man, while they fill with the poison of their guilt the inner one; sins which pollute the blood, disfigure the countenance, destroy the health, and turn the whole frame into a mass of corruption. How many martyrs of intemperance and licentiousness prove by a bitter experience the truth of the apostle's words, "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;" and realise the description of Zophar, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which lie down with him in the dust." Oh, to sit down amidst wasted fortunes with a body half destroyed by profligacy, and the voice of conscience telling of slighted opportunities, abused privileges, and stifled convictions! Young men, think of this "mourning at last," when it will be too late to mourn, and when the mourning will be the more bitter the longer it has been delayed. Impenitence does not put away sorrow, but only postpones it to a future period, when mercy shall have fled for ever, and nothing remain but a fearful recollection of past sins, and a still more fearful foreboding of wrath to come. How will neglected warnings, despised sermons, and slighted counsels, then rise like spectres from the grave of oblivion, each repeating that dreadful sarcasm, "Son, remember!"

I hold up now another portraiture, I mean that of the Drunkard. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babblings? Who

hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou at the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." This is perhaps the most graphic and vivid description of drunkenness ever given to the world. The drawing is perfect, and not less so the colouring. It has been often called, and with great truth and justice, "the drunkard's looking-glass, in which he may see his own face." It is said that amidst all the splendid furniture and ornaments of our gin palaces no mirror is found; the vendors of the poison not being willing that the miserable victims should see reflected their own suicidal act, in gulping the fatal dram. In default of a looking-glass, I wish they could be compelled to have the passage just quoted painted in large and flaming characters, and hung up in the most conspicuous places of those human slaughter-houses. Observe the description of the drunkard. The quarrelsome temper which liquor produces, the fights in which it involves the man who quaffs it, and the wounds he gets in his affrays; his babbling discourse on subjects which he does not understand, and is then unfitted to discuss, when blasphemy is wit, treason

courage, and ribaldry eloquence; his going on, when inflamed by wine, to the gratification of other lusts, and the commission of other sins; his insensibility to injury and danger when his brain is stupified; his returning to the indulgence of his vicious appetite when awakening up from his drunken slumber; his intense misery and woe produced by his remorse of mind and wretchedness of body, these are all set forth in this wonderful passage with a graphic power that nothing can excel. Begin life, Young Men, with an extreme dread of this vice. There is ground for alarm. Drunkenness was never more prevalent than it is now. Myriads and myriads sink every year into the drunkard's grave, and lower still, into the drunkard's hell. One-half of the lunacy, two-thirds of the pauperism, and three-fourths of the crime of society, are said to spring from this desolating habit. Beware then of this dreadful appetite and propensity. Be afraid of it. Consider yourselves liable to it. Abandon all self-confidence. Avoid everything that leads to drinking. Abjure tobacco in every shape. Shun bad company. Never cross the threshold of the tavern for the purpose of conviviality. Practise total abstinence. All the drunkards that are, or ever have been, were moderate men once. I do most earnestly entreat you to abstain from all intoxicating drinks. You do not need them for health, and to take them for gratification is the germ of inebriety. Total abstinence will conduce to health, to economy, to prosperity. You will one day bless me if this chapter should lead you to adopt this practice. I do not say that this will ensure the practice of every virtue, and the enjoyment of all pros-

perity, but I know nothing in the order of preparatory means more likely to be followed with such results.

And now, I ask, what is it that leads to all other sins? Idleness; and I therefore now direct you to the last picture which I shall present in this chapter. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well; I looked upon it and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man." This too is fine painting; the late riser, the lover of sleep, the drowsy drone, lifting up his half-opened lids weighed down with sleep, grumbling at the person who has disturbed him, turning away from him on his bed; and settling himself down again to slumber! And the broken fence left without repair, the thorns and nettles covering the field and choking the vineyard! How true to life! Idleness is a complicated vice, yes, I say vice. First it is a most wasteful habit. It wastes time, which is more precious than rubies, it wastes a man's mental faculties, and dooms the noblest machine on earth to stand still: it wastes property, and should compel the sluggard to put down in his expenses a large sum per annum lost by neglect. It is disgraceful, for how reproachful is it in a being made to be active, to spend life in doing nothing, and to throw away his mental powers in sloth. It is criminal, for God has commanded us to be active, and will call us to account for

the sin of killing time. It is dangerous; doing nothing is next to doing ill, and is sure to lead to it. From its very inaction it ultimately becomes the active cause of all evil; as a palsy is more to be dreaded than a fever. The Spaniard has a proverb which says, "The Devil tempts all other men; but the idle man tempts the Devil." Idleness is the stagnant pool that deposits mud, and breeds all kinds of vermin; but running water is clear, sweet, and wholesome. Idleness is wretchedness. An idle man, as I said in a former chapter, is the most miserable of all God's creatures: and woe be to the man who is doomed to bear the pain and penalties of a slothful disposition. Employment is not only a source of excellence, but of enjoyment. Young men, be industrious. It will be a source at once of pleasure and profit. If you study the Book of Proverbs for nothing else, study it for the purpose of promoting industry. No man who ever made this book the subject of his study and the rule of his life, failed to ensure a competency; while multitudes who have acted thus have attained to honour and wealth.

Let me now, in conclusion, enumerate a few general points, which are suggested by a consideration of this interesting portion of Holy Scripture.

We see the benevolence of God, in not only providing the means for our glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life in heaven, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, but in giving us, in this valuable book, the most minute directions for all the details of our earthly life. He not only wills our salvation hereafter, but our convenience and comfort here. He acts like a good and rich father, who, while he makes his

son heir of all his estate, consults, in the minutest particulars, his well-being and enjoyment through the period of his boyhood and education. How exquisitely beautiful it is to see God thus managing our mean affairs, intent even upon our success in trade, promoting our pleasant intercourse with our neighbours, and supplying us with the means to secure a thousand little enjoyments, and to protect ourselves from a thousand little annoyances, on our road to our Father's house in heaven. To me the Book of Proverbs proves the condescension of God's goodness, while the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament exhibit its grandeur and sublimity. Arising out of this is the observation, what an inestimable volume and priceless treasure is the Bible, which thus proclaims to us the goodness of God, and carries out his gracious purpose towards us! I want, young men, to endear to your hearts this book of books, and therefore will embrace every opportunity presented by this treatise, to commend it to your attention and regard. I want to fortify you against the seductions of infidelity and false philosophy. I want to show you the injustice to yourselves, as well as the wickedness towards God, and the hypocrisy, as well as the cruelty, of those who, under the pretext of liberating your mind from thraldom, and exalting you to the dignity of men of reason, would deliver you from what they call the dominion of superstition and the trammels of the Bible. It is their delight to represent the Bible as teaching only a system of priestcraft; as prescribing only a round of religious ceremonies; and forming a character fit only to dwell in a monastery, or to worship in

a church. Ask them if they have ever deigned to read the Book of Proverbs. If not, they are unfit to pronounce an opinion upon the Bible; and if they have, tell them that by such misrepresentations they lie against their own knowledge; for here is a part of the Bible which, they must know, follows us into the social haunts of men, to the family, to the shop, to the market and exchange, in order to dictate truth, kindness, and meekness in our words, and justice, honesty, and honour, in our transactions; which regulates all sales and purchases upon the principles of equity; gives validity and efficacy to all contracts; prohibits all wrong, and sustains all right. A single perusal of this book would convince them that if it were universally possessed, believed and practised, human laws would be almost unnecessary, courts of justice would be forsaken, and jails untenanted. Take up this volume with the simple question, "What kind of a man shall I be if I follow the rules herein contained?" Hold fast your Bible then, till infidelity can find you a better rule of conduct for this life, a brighter revelation and a surer hope for another. Ask it what it has to offer you in exchange for doctrines so sublime, morality so pure, precepts so wise, promises so precious, prospects so grand. And what has it to offer? A dreary, blank, and hideous negative, no God, no Redeemer, no salvation, no heaven: no, nor anything even in this world to save you from the dominion of vice, or to guide you to the practice and enjoyment of virtue; this is all that infidelity has to give you as a substitute for the Bible. Say to it with surprise, indignation, abhorrence, "Avaunt, lying spirit!

Curse not me with your discoveries of nothing. Is this all you have to give me in exchange for that volume which is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come? You have nothing by which I may steer my course across the stormy ocean of this life; and nothing at the end of the voyage but the black rocks of annihilation on which I must dash, and be for ever lost. Begone, with thy creed of wretched negations, to him who is fool enough to be cajoled out of his Bible by thy miserable sophistries." Sometimes the mind is more impressed with the atrocity of an intended felony, by examining the articles one by one, which it would have purloined, than by looking at the whole in a mass. So it is in judging of infidelity, take up book by book of Scripture, examine each separately, and say, "The felon infidel would rob me of this, and this, and this." Yes, Young Men, he would cheat you, among the rest, out of the Book of Proverbs. He would tell you that this is imposition, and no revelation from God at all. Or if he consented to leave it in your hands, he would, by taking away its divine authority, deprive it of all power to bind your conscience as law, and merely submit it for your adoption as advice, which you are at liberty to reject if you do not like it.

This book shows us the connection between true religion and general excellence of character, which was noticed in the last chapter, when we contemplated the character of Joseph, and is now repeated in this general analysis of the Book of Proverbs. It lays the foundation broad, deep, and strong, in that wisdom

which is the fear of God. It anticipates the apostolic injunction, "Add to your faith, virtue." The foundation of the temple of virtue is religion; the golden ornament upon its dome is all that is gentle in spirit and graceful in demeanour. Hence is to be derived that completeness of character which this book is intended and calculated to form. It begins with the heart, and forms a holy mechanism there, which guides the hands in regular movements round the dial-plate of life. It implants right principles of action. It communicates a hidden life, it sanctifies the inner man, and thus fashions the outer man, and does not merely paint a picture or carve a bust. Here man in all his relations and all his interests is consulted, as a creature of God, as a citizen of the state, as a member of society, as an inmate of the dwelling, as a creditor or a debtor, as a buyer or a seller; in each and all these he is contemplated, directed, and encouraged. It has been beautifully observed, that "we want religion to be to the character what the soul is to the body, the animating principle. The soul operates in every member. It sees in the eye, hears in the ear, speaks in the tongue, animates the whole body, with ease and uniformity, without ostentation or effort." Thus let the good conduct of the citizen, the son, the husband, the father, the brother, the tradesman, be only so many operations of true piety, so many acts of this animating soul, so many developments of this hidden life.

Though there is much in this book which, properly understood and followed, would, in connection with other parts of Scripture, guide the reader to heaven,

and prepare him for its enjoyment, it must be confessed and remembered, that it principally aims to form the social character for the present world. What I have already said on this subject I repeat, that for a clear and explicit knowledge of the way of pardon and eternal life, we must read the New Testament. There we learn how Christ is made of God unto us "wisdom, and righteousnes, and sanctification, and redemption." And there also we learn the great moral principles on which all the transactions of this world's business should be founded: but in this book of the wise king, principles of wisdom and virtue are given in detail for every relation of social life. It is the commercial man's vade mecum. It may lie upon his desk by the side of his ledger, and that in a thousand instances would have been in a better state, had this been more constantly consulted. It is my firm belief, that no man who reads this book through with close attention and earnest prayer, once a year, will fail, either in this world, or in reference to that which is to come. It is designed and adapted to form the industrious, prudent, honourable, and successful man of business, and is therefore eminently suited to this great commercial country. Napoleon Buonaparte, when in the zenith of his power and pride, called this country, more in a spirit of mortification and envy than of contempt, a nation of shopkeepers. If in that term he comprehended our merchants and manufacturers, he did not inaptly describe us. We are not ashamed of our commercial character and greatness; and provided our merchandise be carried on upon the

principles of this book, and we thus inscribe upon it Holiness to the Lord, it is our glory and defence.

In this book is disclosed the secret of true happiness, which, if really put into practice, will make happy individuals, happy families, happy neighbourhoods, happy nations, and a happy world. All the errors which men have fallen into on this subject, all the delusive shadows, the polluted springs, the deleterious ingredients, which have misled and injured so many, are here detected and exposed; while the nature, the source, and the means of true felicity, are as clearly pointed out. Here in the favour of God, in the mortification of our corruptions, in the restraint of our passions, in the cultivation of our graces, in the performance of our duties, in promoting the good of our neighbours, and in the hope of immortality, are the materials of human blessedness. Here happiness is set forth, not in the heathen forms of Bacchus, Venus, or Momus; not by such descriptions as those of Horace, Ovid, and Anacreon; not in such riot and revelry as the lovers of pleasure in every age would recommend. Quite the contrary. In this book happiness is seen descending from heaven, her native place, and lighting upon our orb in the seraph form of religion. She is clad in the robe of righteousness, arrayed in the garment of salvation, and adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Like the king's daughter of old, she "is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold." Joy sparkles in her eye, and peace reposes upon her brow. Her conscience is rendered easy by a sense of pardon, and her heart is light through purity. The song of the seraphim is

upon her lips. Her hand is alternately lifted up in adoration to God, and stretched out in mercy to his necessitous creatures. Her feet ever carry her with willing steps either to the house of prayer, or to the abodes of sorrow. Her excellences are described, and her praises are sung, not in the odes of licentious poets, at sensual orgies, in strains inspired by lust and wine; but in the hymns composed by prophets and apostles, resounding in the temples of devotion, or chanted by good and holy men in the circles of their friends, or the homes of their families. Such is the happiness set forth in this book, the only thing which deserves, the only thing that can prove itself worthy of, the name. That seraph form alights, Young Men, in your path, and with her own angelic, divine, and heavenly smile, beckons you to follow her to the well-springs of delight, repeating, at every step, the beautiful language of this book, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom."

CHAPTER VIII.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE IN BUSINESS.

He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. PROVERBS x, 4.
In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider. ECCLESIASTES vii, 14.

THINK not, Young Men, that in selecting subjects for the last two chapters and a previous one, from the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, I am drawing your attention from the New to the Old Testament, and investing the latter with an importance superior to that of the former. By no means. Both the portions of the sacred volume belong to the one divine system of revealed truth, and they stand related to each other as the two great lights of the moral world, the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. The Old Testament, with lunar effulgence borrowed from the yet invisible orb of spiritual day, shone forth upon the Jewish Church during the night season of its existence; while the New, with its own brightness, constitutes the day of our Christian dispensation. But though the sun of righteousness has arisen, the moon is still a valuable member of our spiritual system. Let us then hold fast both parts of the Bible, not neglecting the books of Moses, David, Solomon,

and the Prophets; but delighting most to study the gospels and epistles, because of their clearer revelation of everything that stands connected with the moral character of God, the person and work of Christ, the way of salvation, and the glories of immortality.

The book of Ecclesiastes, when properly understood, is an important portion of Sacred Scripture. It is on good grounds ascribed to Solomon, and is supposed as I stated in the last chapter, to have been composed after his recovery from his deplorable apostacy, and to have been intended by him to be a record of his own experience, and a warning, or at any rate a lesson, to mankind. Its chief design seems to be to answer that momentous inquiry, prompted at once by the misery and the ignorance of fallen humanity, "Who will shew us any good?" Man is made for happiness, and is capable of it: but what is it, and how is it to be obtained! To possess and enjoy it, he must be furnished with some good, suited to his nature, adapted to his condition, and adequate to his capacity and desires.

The nature of the chief good has been, in every age, the interesting subject of most earnest philosophic inquiry. But how various and opposed have been the conclusions at which the inquirers have arrived on this important subject! Varro, a learned Latin writer, who died about thirty years before Christ, reckoned up more than two hundred different opinions on this subject; thus plainly evincing man's ignorance of his own nature, circumstances, and wants. Not perceiving what it is that has made him miserable, he cannot know of course what will make him happy.

Unacquainted with, or rather overlooking, the disease, he cannot know the remedy. He feels an aching void within, an unsatisfied craving after something, but knows neither the nature nor the source of the food adapted to meet and satisfy his hungry appetite. What human reason is thus proved to be too ignorant and too weak to decide, the Bible undertakes to settle; that which no human authority can adjudicate upon, the oracle of God explicitly, imperatively, and infallibly, determines for all and for ever. Precious Bible, if only for this! The vagrant spirit of man is seen wandering from God, the fountain of bliss, roaming through this "dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" anxiously looking for happiness, but never finding it; coming often to springs that are dry, and to cisterns that are broken, till weary of the pursuit and disappointed in his hopes, it is ready to give up all in despair, and reconcile itself to misery, under the notion that happiness is but a name. In this sad and hopeless mood, the victim of grief and despondency is met by the Bible, which takes him by the hand, and leads him to the fountain of living waters. Such is the design of this extraordinary book, to shew first of all what will not, and then what will, make man happy. Upon all the most coveted possessions of this world, it pronounces the solemn and impressive sentence, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." It interrogates singly every coveted object of human desire, and asks, "What are you?" only to receive the melancholy answer, "Vanity." Or if, deceptively, they return another answer, it turns to the man who has possessed and proved them all, and he contradicts

their testimony and mournfully cries, "They are vanity."

In the beginning of the book, Solomon gives this out as the first part of his subject, and then twenty times repeats it, and oftener still alludes to it in the course of his details; and when he has finished his proofs and illustrations, he formally re-announces it in his peroration. He does not by this sentence intend to pass any censure on the works of nature, the dispensations of Providence, or the arrangement of man's social existence. All things are good in their nature, relations, and designs, as God originally made them; but man's sinfulness renders all corrupt to him; he makes those things to be ends which were only intended to be means; rests in what is subordinate instead of going on to that which is supreme; and abuses that which is granted him only for use. Solomon shews us in this book, that nothing on earth can satisfy the soul of man, as its supreme good. Three thousand years nearly have passed away since he wrote. Science has multiplied its discoveries, art its inventions, and literature its productions; civilization has opened new sources of luxury, and ingenuity has added innumerable gratifications of appetite and taste, unknown even to Solomon; every domain of nature has been explored, and every conceivable experiment been made, to extort from her new means of enjoyment, and new secrets of happiness; but still the heart of man confirms the testimony of the king of Israel, and the experience of the human race prolongs the echo of his words, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

This however is only the negative view of the subject. If all these are vanity and not good, what is good, and is there anything which really deserves the name? There is; and it is the design of this portion of Scripture to reveal and to declare it. What is it? What, that is to settle the question, and reveal to the children of men the nature and the source of happiness? What, that is to terminate the weary pursuits, to revive the languid hopes, and to gratify the anxious desires, of the destitute and sorrowing children of men, hungering and thirsting after bliss? What? Wisdom. That wisdom of which I spoke in the last chapter, as constituting the subject of the book of Proverbs; between which portion of Scripture and this Book of Ecclesiastes there is so close a resemblance of design and construction. But what is wisdom? He himself declares in the last chapter, where he sums up the whole of what he has said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." The first six chapters of the book give negative views of happiness, and are intended as illustrations of the declaration, "All is vanity:" the remainder is devoted to the illustration of the nature, excellence, and beneficial effects of true wisdom or religion. This then, after all the inquiries of philosophers, is the chief good, true religion. This suits the nature, meets the wants, alleviates the sorrows, satisfies the desires, of the human soul, and is its portion for ever. This finds man depraved, and makes him holy; finds him little, and makes him great; finds him earthly, and raises him to heaven. This leads the human spirit, through the

mediation of Christ, into the presence of the infinite, eternal, omnipotent, and all-sufficient Author of its existence, and by the teaching and aid of the Holy Spirit, impels and helps him to say, "Thou art my portion, O my God. Thy favour is life, and Thy loving kindness is better than life. Thou art the centre, the rest, the home, of my heart."

Perhaps we shall better understand this book, "if we suppose that the author at every step is meeting the arguments of an objector, who contends that appearances, in the present world, are such as to exclude the idea of a superintending Providence; to confound together, without discrimination as to their fate or fortunes, their merit or desert, the wise and the foolish, goodness and sin; thus destroying all rational hope for the future, and leaving nothing better to man than that he should eat and drink, and enjoy himself here as well as he can. The author meets, examines, and answers these objections, by exposing the unsatisfactoriness of mere pleasure, and insists on the regality and supremacy of duty." This view of the design and the construction of the book will remove that appearance of an atheistic spirit which seems, in the view of objectors, to characterise some passages.

Having considered the design of the book, and thrown, I hope, some light upon what appears a little enigmatical, I will proceed to take up the subject of this chapter, and consider success or failure in business.

I will suppose the case of two young men setting out in life with equal advantages as to capital, connexions, and prospects. They have gone through

their term of apprenticeship, and the intermediate stage of the shopman or clerk, and have commenced business for themselves. One of them succeeds, a propitious gale seems to fill his sails, and a favourable tide to flow in, to help him onward in his course from the very time of sailing. He makes a prosperous voyage, and enters safely into harbour with a rich cargo. His business flourishes, his capital increases, he rises to competency, to respectability, perhaps to wealth. His influence and his rank in society keep pace, of course, with the increase of his opulence. Such cases often occur in this trading and commercial country. It is only a few days since I was visiting a friend not very remote, who has recently taken a large house and beautiful grounds, though he came to the town with only a few shillings in his pocket. While in this humble condition, one day while gazing at a mansion and its surrounding lawn through the opened gates, he felt the kindlings of desire and ambition in his soul, and said to himself, "I will one day possess such a place as that if I can." He was an industrious young man, got on in life, became a true Christian, a prosperous tradesman, and now is dwelling in elegance in the house, and enjoying the grounds which excited his desires; and what is still better, is giving God the glory of all, and sanctifying his prosperity by Christian liberality. He is also the deacon of a Christian church. I might mention another pious individual, of large fortune, and a member of parliament, who was once a boy in a Sunday-school. And indeed, such instances of success are numerous.

There is, however, a dark reverse to all this, which

sometimes occurs; I mean an early failure. In this case the vessel has no sooner left port than it encounters unfavourable winds, is tossed upon the billows by tempests, and dashed upon the rock, or stranded upon the shore, becomes a wreck. The business commenced with hope terminates in disappointment, and the young tradesman is soon converted into a young bankrupt. This, in such a country as ours, is no uncommon case. May it, Young Men, never be yours. It is important to inquire into the causes for this difference of result. I put aside the idea of chance. There is no such thing in our world, none in nature, none in human affairs. We must not explain the matter by saying, "It was just as it happened. One was a lucky man and the other an unlucky one." Luck, if it mean nothing more than an event of which the cause is not apparent, is a term that may be applied without error; but if it means, as it generally does, an event which has no cause at all, a mere chance, it is a bad word, a heathen term. Drop it from your vocabulary. Trust nothing to luck, and expect nothing from it. Avoid all practical dependence upon it or its kindred words, fate, chance, fortune. True it is, that success or failure in business, as in other things, depends often upon a concurrence of circumstances, which no human sagacity can foresee, and no human forethought can control; but this is not chance, luck, fate, or fortune, but Providence. There is much of Providence in every man's history, and more of favouring Providence in some men's lives than in others. "The lot is cast into the lap, (or urn, the usual way of drawing lots,) but the disposal thereof is of the Lord."

Providence no doubt gives advantages to some which it does not bestow upon others. Scripture is full of instances of this kind. How conspicuous was Providence in the history of Joseph! How manifest in the life of Moses! How remarkable in the advancement of David and Mordecai! In ordinary life we see the same kind and unexpected interpositions on behalf of some favoured individuals. Throughout the whole range of Scripture, prosperity is spoken of as the gift of God; as matter of prayer where it is desired, and of grateful acknowledgment where it is possessed. "The rich and the poor meet together, but the Lord is maker of them all:" not merely as men, but as rich and poor. Therefore believe in Providence. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich." Look up for that blessing by constant, earnest, believing prayer. Enter upon life devoutly believing in God, as the God of Providence. Do nothing upon which you cannot ask his blessing, and then seek his blessing upon everything you do. Never forget your dependence upon him. He can exalt you to prosperity, or sink you in the lowest depth of adversity. He can make everything to which you set your hand to prosper, or to fail. Devoutly acknowledge this. Abjure the infidelity that shuts God out of his own world.

There is a passage, however, which, as it seems to favour an opposite view to this, I will explain. "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and

chance happeneth to them all." The obvious meaning of this verse is, that while there are some so timid and desponding as to expect nothing from their exertions, there are others so sanguine, bold, and self-confident, as to feel almost sure to succeed in everything: and while the preceding verse is intended to stimulate the energies of the former, by showing the benefit of exertion, this verse is designed to check the proud confidence of the latter, by reminding them, that the success of human efforts is not always in proportion to their ability. "Time and chance happen to all." There are times propitious and unpropitious in the history of all, for the accomplishment of our purposes, over which we can have no command or control: and an endless variety of circumstances, which, as they could not be foreseen, and cannot be controlled, may appear like chance, which may frustrate the wisest plans, and render nugatory the most industrious exertions. All is Providence in determining results. So that from this well-known and frequently-quoted passage, we are not to conclude there is no adaptation of means to ends, no correspondence between the qualities and actions of men and their results; that there is, in fact, no superior probability of success for the swift more than for the slow, for the strong more than for the weak, for the intelligent more than for the ignorant, for the skilful more than for the foolish. Far from it. For if this were the case, forethought, intelligence, industry, were all useless; a large portion of Scripture would be contradicted by itself; and this passage proved false by a reference to examples constantly occurring before us. The meaning evidently is, that though these qualities tend to

success, they cannot actually ensure it. Such a passage is not intended to discourage industry, but only to check a spirit of proud self-reliance: not to repress the energies and the chastened confidence of man as a rational being, but to call into exercise his caution and piety as a dependent being. It is ever to be remembered that Providence works by means, and the means employed are those which possess an adaptation to produce the end intended. And since God has appointed the employment of means, we do as much homage to him in using them, as we do in depending upon him for their success; in the one we honour his wisdom, and in the other his power. Hence, therefore we must, in ordinary cases, look for the means of success, and the causes of failure, in men's own conduct. This is true both in spiritual and temporal things; and is as true in one as the other, for the God of nature and providence is the God of grace, and there is an analogy between the methods of his procedure in these two departments of his action. In each second causes are employed; and in each the means are adapted to the end. Let us then examine into the causes of the two different results of success and failure.

I. The possession or want of ability, cleverness, good judgment, and tact, in trade, will often account for success or failure. Success in any department of human action, without a competent knowledge of the means of obtaining it, cannot be expected, and ordinarily never is obtained. It is true an unusual occurrence of what are called fortunate circumstances may in some cases contribute to results not otherwise to be

looked for: but they form the exceptions, not the rule. It is undesirable for some young persons to be acquainted with such cases, as they may receive from them an unfavourable influence, leading them to trust to what they call luck rather than ability. It is in the order of nature for intelligence combined with industry to succeed, and you should not let an occasional instance of prosperous ignorance, happening now and then, shake your conviction of the necessity of skill. Though in these cases the element of knowledge was in small proportion, the other elements of success in some measure compensated for that deficiency by their abundance: a combination not to be expected in your case. A man must at all times, especially in this age of competition, thoroughly know not only his own trade, but the principles of trade in general. Business is an art and a science too, and to succeed he must be acquainted with both. He must know how to buy and how to sell. He must be a judge of articles and prices. He must know the markets and the times. In order to this, young men, you must be thoughtful, observant, and diligent, as apprentices and shopmen. You must be neither lovers of pleasure, nor companions of those who are such. Next to religion, it should be your aim to gain a complete mastery of your trade. Who are the men that usually succeed? Not the dolts, the ill-informed or the half-informed, but the well-informed. Who are the men that fail? Usually you will find them not the well-informed, but the half-informed, or the ill-informed. Even religion itself, however eminent, cannot supply the want of the knowledge and the habits of a good tradesman. God-

liness, it is true, is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. But then it is not godliness without other things, but with them. A good and holy young man is not to expect to succeed by the favour of God, without either industry or ability. God's blessing is not to be looked for as a substitute for these. He does not bless pious dolts, in whom the want of ability is the result of neglect. God will not set aside the general laws by which he governs the social world in favour of religion, any more than he will those of the natural world. Even a seraph, were he incarnate upon earth, would, if he had no acquaintance with earthly affairs, make a bad farmer or a bad manufacturer. Nor will the countenance and support of friends lead to success, without the tradesman's own skill. Who can help an incompetent man? What foreign aid can be a substitute for personal ability? There are some cripples too feeble to walk, even with the help of others; so there are some persons too ignorant ever to be helped to succeed; capital will not do without knowledge. The largest amount of it will be soon dissipated, where there is no skill to direct its employment. And beware of over-stocking and trading beyond your capital; a very frequent source of ruin to young tradesmen is allowing commercial travellers to force upon them too large purchases.

II. Success or failure depends a great deal upon a favourable commencement, a good start. This is true as a general principle in application to all things. Bad beginnings may be repaired, but they are not usually. A first wrong step is often, if not always, the begin-

ning of a series of steps all wrong. Great care, caution, circumspection, and forethought therefore are necessary here. Many begin too soon, before they have sufficient capital or competent knowledge. They are impatient to be masters, before they are prepared for it. They are unwilling to bide their time, and they also miscalculate their ability. They are better fitted to obey than to rule. It is not every good servant that will make an able master, though unquestionably the best preparation for the latter is the former. He that begins with little capital and less experience commences with fearful disadvantages, and failure has often been the result. Our most successful tradesmen have been cautious, as well as able, men. They have begun perhaps with limited capital, but they did not overtrade with it. They were willing to creep before they walked; to walk before they ran; and to run before they fled. They exemplified the truth of the Latin proverb, seemingly so paradoxical, "Hasten slowly." Beginning well is a great thing, and next to ending well; the one leads on to the other. Let there then be much reflection, much counsel, much prayer, in such an important step as commencing business for yourself. As this, like marriage, is a step for life, let it be taken with care, and think no time lost, or too long, which is necessary to enable you to tread firmly and steadily at the outset. For one that has repented of beginning too late, ten have repented that they began too soon. Next to seeking counsel from God, by earnest and believing prayer, seek the advice of disinterested, wise and experienced men. A young man came to me some years ago, to get an introduction to any friend

whom I might know in the neighbourhood in which he wished to engage in business, and who would be willing to give him counsel on the probable success of a concern which he had some thoughts of taking. I gave him a letter to one of the most capable men in the country, who received him very kindly, and very wisely and earnestly advised him to abandon the project. But he had set his heart upon it, and, in opposition to the counsel which had been given him, entered upon the concern, and he was very soon glad to abandon it, and escaped with difficulty from being utterly ruined. Do not first make up your mind, and then ask advice afterwards. Reverse this order, and go to the oracle first, and defer to its responses.

III. Success and failure are dependent upon diligence on the one hand, or neglect and indolence on the other. For proofs of this, I refer to that invaluable book which was the subject of my last chapter, and to your own reason and observation. I have already quoted one passage from the Proverbs, which says, "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich;" I now add to it another, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." Both are true, and they stand related to each other as the instrumental and the efficient cause. Man's industry cannot be successful without God's blessing, and God's blessing is not bestowed without man's industry. The Lord's providential visits are never granted to loiterers. Moses, David, and the shepherds at Bethlehem, were all keeping their flocks, and Gideon was at his threshing floor, when God's revelations were made to them. How is slothfulness exposed, condemned, branded, in God's book! Let a man have

ever so good a knowledge of his business; let him begin with all the advantages of capital, connections, and situation; yet if he be of an indolent and self-indulgent habit, a late riser, a lover of pleasure; a gossiping neighbour, a zealous political partizan, more busy in improving the state than in minding his own concerns; he will soon furnish another evidence of the truth of Solomon's words, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand." Weigh well then, young men, the import of that momentous word, diligence. You remember the anecdote of Demosthenes, who, on being asked the first grace of elocution, replied, "Delivery." The second? "Delivery." The third? "Delivery." So if asked what is the first qualification of a successful tradesman? I answer, "Diligence." The second? "Diligence." The third? "Diligence." Write it upon your hearts. Keep it ever before your eyes. Let it be ever sounding in your ears. Let it be said of you, as was affirmed of that admirable and holy missionary, Henry Martyn, when he was at college, "That he was known as the man who never lost an hour."

IV. Method and system have much to do with failure or success. In this I include promptness, as opposed to procrastination. No habit can be more fatal to success than the wretched disposition of postponing till another time that which ought to be done, and can be done, at once. Procrastination has ruined millions for both worlds. There is a class of adverbs which some men appear not to have studied, but which are of immense importance in all the affairs both of time and eternity. I mean the words, "instantly,"

"immediately," "at once," "now," for which they have unhappily substituted "presently," "by and bye," "to-morrow," "at some future time." Young men, catch the inspiration of that weighty monosyllable "now." Yield to the potency of that word "instantly," and to use a still more business-like term, acquire a habit of "dispatch." And in order to this, do not only be always doing something that should be done, but the thing that ought to be done next. Punctuality is of immense consequence. It has been humorously said, "some people seem to have been born half an hour after their time, and they never fetch it up all their lives." In the present busy age, when business is so extended and complicated, and when, of course, one man is so dependent upon another, and oftentimes many upon one, a want of punctuality is not only a fault, but a vice, and a vice which inflicts an injury not only upon the transgressor himself, but upon others who have been waiting for him. "You have caused us to lose an hour," said a gentleman to another, for whose appearance twelve persons had been waiting. "Oh, that is impossible," replied the laggard, "for it is only five minutes after the time." "Very true," was the rejoinder, "but here are twelve of us, each of whom has lost five minutes." He who keeps servants, customers, or creditors waiting through his want of punctuality, can never prosper. This is as irreligious as it is injurious, inasmuch as the apostle has commanded us to "redeem the time." Order is no less essential to system and success than promptness and punctuality. Order, it is said, is heaven's first law, an aphorism as true of earth as it is of heaven, and as applicable to

the movements of trade as those of the stars. A place and a time for every thing, and everything in its place and time, is the rule of every successful tradesman. A disorderly and irregular man may be diligent, that is, may be ever in a bustle, a very different thing from a well regulated activity, but his want of order defeats everything. The machinery of his habits may have velocity and power, but its movements are irregular and eccentric, and therefore unproductive, or productive only of uncertain, incomplete, and sometimes mischievous results. A disorderly man wastes not only his own time, but that of others who are dependent upon, and waiting for him; nor does the waste stop here, for what a useless expenditure of energy and a painful sacrifice of comfort are ever going on with him!

V. Economy has a most powerful influence in determining the failure or success of a young tradesman. This applies to personal, trade, and domestic expenses, and the man who would succeed in life must reduce them all to the lowest prudent level. In order to keep down the expenses of trade, he must do with as little purchased help as he can; and to accomplish this, he must be a hard worker himself, till he has attained to that pitch of prosperity, when he can do more with his eyes and ears than with his hands and feet. As to personal expenses let him avoid all unnecessary consumption of money in dress and ornaments. Let it be no part of your ambition, young men, to be noticed and admired for matters of this kind. It is a very grovelling ambition to be complimented for that with which the draper, the mercer, and the jeweller, may bedizen the veriest fool in existence. How mean and

petty is foppery, compared with an enlightened mind, a dignified character, and the beauties of holiness! I am not an advocate for either meanness or slovenliness. Cleanliness and neatness border upon virtue, as excessive foppery and expensiveness do upon vice. It is unworthy of a female to be inordinately fond of dress; but for a man to love finery is despicable indeed. Avoid also the love of pleasure, for "he that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man." Never were truer words uttered. The man who is bent upon what is called "enjoying himself," who will have his boon companions, his amusements and his frequent seasons of recreation; who is fond of parties, entertainments, the gaming table, the ball room, the concert, and the theatre, is on the high road to poverty in this world, and to hell in the next. Let the lover of pleasure read the history of Sampson in the Old Testament, and of the Prodigal in the New; and also let him turn back to the illustrations contained in the last chapter. If you would have economical habits as a master, cultivate them as a servant. Begin then now and persevere. You must carry out the principle of economy in your domestic establishment also. Frugality in the house is a virtue, and extravagance a vice. If you would have elegance and luxuries at the close of life, be content with necessaries at the beginning of it. He that must have superfluities at the beginning, will in all probability have scarcely comforts at the end. Let your furniture, your style of living, your whole domestic establishment, be all arranged upon the principle of a rigid, though not mean, economy. Never aim to cover over poverty by extravagance, nor adopt the false principle that dash is

necessary to success. Such conduct often defeats its own end, by exciting suspicion and undermining credit. Wise creditors have keen and vigilant eyes, that look not only at the shop, but penetrate into the dining and drawing room, and thus watch the mode of living as well as of doing business. They deal more readily and upon better terms with the frugal man, than with the extravagant one. The basis of credit is laid in economical simplicity and plain living, not in unsubstantial splendour; just as the foundation of a house consists of unadorned bricks and unsculptured stone, and not of carved and gilded wood. It is the diligent and frugal man who is considered the trustworthy one. But while I recommend economy, I would with equal force condemn meanness; and reprobate with stronger language still, a want of principle. There have been men of fine talents, and otherwise excellent character, who have well nigh ruined themselves by a spirit of mean and starveling economy, which grudged the very means of success. There have been even professing Christians, and some of great benevolence too, who, from education or habit, have been so mean in some of their pecuniary transactions as to throw a shade over their character. Economy, when rigid, has not unfrequently degenerated into sordid avarice. Hence the necessity of being on your guard against the meanest of all vices, the most despicable of all passions, and the most insatiable of all appetites, an excessive love of money. It is very striking to observe how seemingly opposite dispositions are balanced in the word of God. How industry is commended and slothfulness condemned in that precious volume; and yet in that same Book it is said,

"Labour not to be rich;" "Labour not for the bread that perisheth;" "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth;" "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction; for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Does not this look like contradiction? If it does it is not so in reality. These seemingly opposed passages are intended to teach us that we are neither to despise money nor to be fond of it. I know it is difficult to define covetousness; to draw the line with precision between the idolatry and contempt of wealth; and to state that exact regard to money which industry requires to stimulate and reward its energies, and which both reason and revelation justify. When however wealth is considered as the chief end of life, and is sought exclusively, to the entire neglect of religion; when it is pursued at the expense of principle and honour; when it is the first thing coveted, and the last thing relinquished; when it is loved for its own sake, instead of its uses; when it is hoarded for the sake of mere accumulation, instead of being diffused for God's glory and man's benefit; when it is regarded as the standard of individual importance both for ourselves and others; it then has become the tyrant of the soul, which it has enslaved, it may be with fetters of silver and gold, but which is not the less a miserable bond slave because of the splendour and value of its shackles.

VI. Perseverance is also necessary to success. Without this nothing good or great can be achieved in our

world. Success is not so much a creation, as a gradual formation, a slow deposit. In business it usually proceeds on the principle of arithmetical progression, till at a certain stage, and in some few instances, it changes its ratio of increase to that of geometrical progression. The ascent in life is usually the reverse of that of a mountain. In the latter case the steepest part is near the summit: in the former, at the base. Both however require perseverance. He that would succeed, must not expect to reach his object by a light, easy and elastic bound, but by many a successive and weary step, and occasionally, perhaps, by a step backwards. He must go on sometimes amidst discouragement, and always with labour. There are some who cannot succeed, because they will not wait to do so. If success does not come at first, they will not follow after it. They are as impatient as the foolish child that sowed his seed in the morning, and went to bed hopeless and crying because he did not see it springing up before sunset. Be ever hopeful, prayerful, and persevering. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it." Be ye also patient.

VII. The possession or the want of religion will have considerable influence in producing success or failure. Not that I mean to say all religious persons will be prosperous, and that all irreligious ones will sink to adversity. But that piety contains most of those qualities which tend to success, while sin, where

it leads on, as it frequently does, to vice, tends to ruin. God has better promises than of wealth and honour for his people, even of glory everlasting; but then, godliness, as I have often said, has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Wisdom, as we saw in the last chapter, has riches and honour in her right hand for many who submit to her sway. It is quite certain that those who have come to poverty and ruin have been dragged down by iniquity, while many have succeeded who owed their prosperity to their piety. We have examples of this in holy Scripture. Religion made Joseph prosper in the house of Potiphar, and raised him to the eminence he obtained in Egypt. Religion elevated David to the throne of Israel. Religion made Daniel prime minister of Babylon. Religion made Nehemiah governor of Judea. And although we should not expect such rewards, it may still bring us prosperity. It is the parent of virtue, the protector of health, the nurse of economy, the patron of industry, the guardian of integrity, the prompter of knowledge, and thus the guide to success, and the helper of prosperity.

And now let me set before you the two young men whom I have supposed to set out in life together, the one eventually failing, and the other succeeding, in business. Failure is a word, in such an application of it, pregnant with terrors. What a variety, complication, and depth of sorrows, are there in that very simple, and not uncommon expression, "He has failed in business!" You are happily unable by reflection, may you never be able by experience, to grasp that comprehension of wretchedness. Now, young men,

I present the fearful subject, the dreadful possibility, to you, first of all, to excite a desire, an anxiety, an earnest solicitude, that in your case it may never be realized. Prevention is better than cure. It is easier to avert ruin by industry and economy, than to bring back prosperity when it has once departed. Be this easier task then your first care and endeavour. For you ruin is yet happily only pictured, a scene for the imagination to contemplate; except indeed as the reality is seen in the history of some acquaintance. Though it is not well to fill your mind with dark imaginings and gloomy forebodings, lest such thoughts become predictions, and the predictions fulfil and so verify themselves; yet is it well to look at the dreaded picture, in order not indeed to quail before it, but to bring up your mind to this determination, "By God's grace upon my own intelligence, industry, economy, and perseverance, this shall never be my lot; but if, in the mysteries of Providence, it should befall me, it shall not be made more dreadful by the venom of self-reproach, it shall come from the ordination of God, and not from my own misconduct."

Still I will suppose that you may, and that some of you will, fail. What then? The answer to this depends upon the causes of the disaster. I will not deny that this in some cases is to be traced entirely to the dispensations of Providence, without any blame to the individual himself. I would not break the bruised reed, by heaping censure upon one who is an object of pity and sympathy. I would not pour vinegar into the wounds of his lacerated heart, and quite crush his broken spirits, by telling him that his misfortunes are

his faults. If, after exercising the abilities and virtues of a good tradesman, after struggling hard and long, it should be your lot to be compelled to yield to difficulties utterly insuperable by skill and labour, in that case, first of all, bow with submission to the will of God. Indulge no hard thoughts of God. Keep down a gloomy hopelessness, a sullen despondence, a comfortless grief. Call in religion to your aid. Open your Bible. Pour out your heart in prayer. Believe in God, in Providence, in Christ. Take it as a matter to be relied upon, that there is some wise and merciful end to be answered by these painful events. Perhaps you were setting out in life forgetful of God. You were striving to make yourself happy without Him. You were entering upon your career in a state of practical atheism. Success in business would have been your spiritual ruin. The gain of the world would have been the loss of your soul. God spake unto you in what you thought was your prosperity, and you would not hear; and now he calls to you in harsher tones, and says to you in the language of the text, Consider. Consider the Author of your troubles, that they come from God: their cause, that sin is the bitter fountain of every bitter stream; their design, to do you good; and their impressive lesson, to teach the vanity of all things earthly, and the necessity of a better portion for man's heart. Ah! young man, you have indeed sorrowfully proved the uncertainty of all things earthly. How soon and suddenly has the beautiful prospect, which expanded before your admiring eyes, been covered with mist and gloom! How have all the ardent hopes which such a scene

inspired withered in your soul and left it bleak and desolate! Well, amidst the fragments of your broken cisterns, now look up to the great fountain of happiness, pouring out its never-failing streams before you. Earth has failed; now turn to heaven. The world has disappointed you; now turn to religion. The creature has forsaken you, now turn to the Creator. All is not lost. Besides, you may recover yourself. You have failed, but it is in early life, not in its decline. You have the main portion of your existence yet before you, and have health and vigour on your side and in your favour; and, in the case I am supposing, with your character unimpaired and your principles unsuspected. It may be only a step back to spring forward with greater vigour. It may be prosperity postponed, not put off for ever. This painful experience may be necessary for you. It may be to prevent a sudden plethora which would have been fatal to you. Abandon not hope then. Do not let the main-spring be broken. Give not yourself to despair. The sun is not gone down, but is only veiled with a cloud. Begin afresh, make good use of your experience. Look up for God's blessing; and you will have it.

But where the failure is the result of blameworthy conduct, what shall be said? Even here I would not be harsh, severe, and reproachful; but would blend tenderness with fidelity. Be humble before God. Your want of attention, industry, and economy, is a sin to be confessed to Him, as well as a matter to be bewailed on your own account. You have neglected God's commands, as well as your own interests. You have abused the gifts of Providence, as well as trifled

with your own happiness. And you cannot be in a right state of mind without penitence, humiliation, and confession. God is displeased with you; and you must seek His forgiveness through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You must take care to blame yourself, not God, for your present situation. Especially must you be careful not to apply to wrong sources of relief. Misfortune and misconduct have led, in thousands of instances, to drinking. Broken in fortune, and equally broken in spirits, men have endeavoured to gain a momentary oblivion of their sorrows in the exhilaration or stupefaction of intoxicating liquor. Dreadful resort! What is this but to add crime to misery; and when the effect of the poisonous draught is over, to overwhelm the miserable dupe of intoxication with sorrows envenomed by the stings of remorse? It is, indeed, a horrible idea, but one that is often realized, that drunkenness should select some of its many victims from the ranks of misfortune, and thus complete the ruin which incompetency or indolence had begun, by depriving the subject of it of all power and all disposition to retrieve his position.

But I now, in contrast, take up the case of those who succeed; a happy, and I rejoice to think, not a very small class. It is a delightful, and to you, my young friends, an encouraging thought, that success, varied of course in degree, is the rule, and failure the exception. Conceive then of the man who, by the blessing of God upon his ability, industry, and economy, makes good his ground, and advances in life to respectable competency; perhaps to affluence. The Scriptures call upon him to be joyful, a state

of mind, in which, without such call, he is likely to be found. A Christian is to be joyful not only in, but for, his prosperity. His joy, however, should be a religious, not a sensual joy. He is not to express his delight by conviviality, extravagance, splendour, and all the other delights of sense and taste. He is piously to trace up all his prosperity to God. He is not boastfully to look round upon his possessions, and say, "My own hand hath gotten me this:" and thus, to use the language of the prophet, "Sacrifice unto their own net, and burn incense to their drag, because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous." Let your joy be subordinate to a higher and nobler felicity, I mean the felicity derived from true religion. Prosperity, if it has its joys, has also its snares. It is, as regards the moral character, the interests of the soul, and man's eternal destiny, a most perilous condition. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kindom of God." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "The prosperity of fools shall slay them." Multitudes have lost their souls in gaining a fortune. Their wealth has been their curse: their gold, the weight that dragged them down to perdition. And after all, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!" The whole world is no more a compensation for the loss of the soul, than a feather or a grain of sand. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Be made happy by religion. "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice."

But the best way to use, to enjoy, and even to preserve prosperity, is to sanctify it by true religion, and to employ it for Christian liberality. Set out in life with the intelligent, deliberate, and fixed determination, that if you should succeed in business, your prosperity shall in due measure be consecrated to the cause of God and man. Already make up your mind to the opinion, that the chief design and highest enjoyment of wealth, is diffusion rather than accumulation. Instead of admiring the men whom you see living in splendid houses, rolling about in gay equipages, and faring sumptuously every day, but who all this while are known by their grandeur, but not by their public spirit, liberality, and good works, fix your delighted gaze upon those nobler spirits, who while sustaining with propriety, yet simplicity, the rank which Providence has assigned to them in society, are economical that they may be liberal, and are redeeming time from business, ease, and elegant retirement, to glorify God and bless their species. Look at the Howards, the Wilberforces, the Thorntons, the Wilsons, the Reynoldses; men who gave their talents, their influence, and their lives, for the benefit of the slave, the prisoner, and the debtor; who renounced in some cases the gains of business for the pursuits of benevolence; and in others carried it on to have larger means to assist the cause of humanity and religion; who lived for others rather than for themselves; and who had far more enjoyment while they lived, and will ever have far more honour after their death, than the sordid and selfish, whose wealth, while it did little to make them happy or respected upon earth, will neither

preserve their names from oblivion, nor yield them a fragment of reward in heaven.

But wait not till you are rich before you begin to be benevolent. Let the beginnings of your success be consecrated by the beginnings of your devotedness. I knew a Christian philanthropist who set out in life by consecrating a tenth of his income to God. He did this when he had but a hundred a year. He became at length possessed of eight thousand a year, and having no children, he did not then satisfy himself with the tithe, as he had commenced, but spent less than two thousand a year on his own simple and elegant establishment, and gave all the rest away.* How much happier, as well as holier, was that christian man than those who hoard for they know not who; or than those who lavish their wealth on splendour, luxury, and pleasure: and, oh! the different reception he will meet with at the bar of God, where wealth must be accounted for; and in eternity, where the successful but irreligious worldling will remember, and be punished for, his unsanctified prosperity!

And now let me remind you that this alternative of failure or success exists also as to the great trial ever going on in this world, which must issue in the ruin or the salvation of your immortal soul. You are here upon probation for eternity. Your chief business is religion, your supreme object should be immortality. He that is enabled to repent, to believe, and to lead a holy life, notwithstanding the temptations by which he is surrounded, who thus obtains the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory, though he should

* Mr Broadley Wilson.

fail in everything else, may look round upon the wreck of all his hopes, prospects, and fortunes, exulting even now in the greatness and the grandeur of his success, and shall stand at the last day, upon the ashes of the globe, after the general conflagration, exclaiming, "I have lost nothing." While he who so far succeeds as to gain everything that is dear to ambition, to avarice, and to sensuality, but fails to obtain the one thing needful, the salvation of his soul, stands now, amidst all his prosperity, a miserable instance of failure in all the great objects of man's immortal being, will be seen in the day of judgment a ruined and lost immortal, and will wander for ever through the universe, with this awful exclamation, "I have voluntarily, deliberately, and irrecoverably incurrred a failure, which it will require an eternity to understand and an eternity to deplore."

CHAPTER IX.

EMIGRATION.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me.

PSALM cxxxix, 7-10.

GOD made this world to be inhabited, and did not intend that it should always remain an untenanted house, or be occupied only by beings without minds to understand its nature, hearts to love him for his favours, and tongues to speak his praise. To man as well as to the inferior creatures, he said, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." And yet at this period of our planet's history, nearly six thousand years after the fitting up of the globe for man's residence, there are vast tracts of the earth, amounting to islands and continents, till lately occupied only by birds, beasts, and reptiles. The fact however of these desolations subserves a moral purpose, inasmuch as it corroborates the chronology of the Bible; for upon the acknowledged principles of the increase of population,

the date of the commencement of our race could not be much otherwise than that assigned to it in revelation. These now unpeopled regions must have been long since filled up, had the present earth been much older than it is according to the chronology of the Bible. Upon the same principles it is evident that it cannot continue for an indefinite period, at least without some depopulating process different from any that has hitherto occurred in the world's history.

Our earth has yet to "yield its increase;" the Transatlantic world, capable of sustaining half the present population of the globe, but till lately tenanted only by savages in the north, and a half-civilised race in the south, and four centuries ago unknown to all the other people on the face of the globe; the island continent of New Holland, with only a scattered sprinkling of savages for its aboriginal inhabitants; the Polynesian Archipelago, and all the yet uninhabited spots of earth where means of support and occupation for man can be obtained, are to be covered with an intelligent, busy population; and where now the forest throws its dark shadow over its innumerable flying or creeping tribes, or the wilderness is the range of herds of untamed beasts, or the jungle affords a shelter to the tiger, the elephant, and the serpent, there shall the dwellings of men and the sanctuaries of God be seen, and the hum of commerce and the anthems of religion be heard.

The replenishing of the earth never went forward more rapidly than in the day and from the country in which we live. Colonization and emigration are two of the grandest features of our age. Infant states are being born to Britain, and our country is becoming the

mother of nations. Myriads and myriads, year after year, are wafted, not only in ships, but I may almost say in fleets, to the shores of America, Australia, and New Zealand. The vast tide of population is flowing out to relieve our overcrowded towns and cities, and to found new towns and cities in the wilds of those distant regions. Thus are carried out the plans of Providence, to have a peopled world instead of a wilderness; and thus are the predictions of holy writ accomplished, which assure us that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth. Everything falls in with the current of God's gracious purposes towards our dark disordered world; everything indicates human improvement and the progress of social existence; everything tends to the diffusion of the Bible, and harmonises with its tendency, design, and announcements; everything is making way for the universal spread and triumph of religion, for the reign of Christ, for the millennial glory and the jubilee of the world.

Some of my readers may, by joining the multitudes of emigrants, be instrumental in this great work of replenishing the earth with people and, if possessed of religion, of carrying the light of divine truth to the ends of the earth. This then is the subject of the present chapter: Emigration. In treating this subject I shall consider

I. The decision. I will suppose the resolve is taken, the plan laid, the purpose unalterable. But what has led to it? There are various and very different motives and grounds for such a step. In some cases it is obedience to the stern dictate of necessity. Misconduct at home renders it a matter of compulsion rather than

of choice to go abroad; it is a flight rather than a voluntary departure. Reputation may have been lost, and lost also the hope of retrieving it here. This is a painful case, but not a hopeless one. If this be your condition, you will have abundant and most favourable opportunities for rectifying what is amiss, without being subject to the suspicion, neglect, rebukes, and frowns of those who knew you in your better days. On your voyage reflect upon your conduct, review the past. Dare to look back. When pacing the deck at night, or lying in your hammock, or listening to the awful roar of the tempest, not knowing but you may be soon swallowed up in the billows raging around you and every now and then breaking over your trembling vessel, repent before God, seek his pardoning mercy through Christ, and implore his Holy Spirit to help you first to resolve upon amendment, and then to carry out your resolution. Determine to begin a new life in a new world. Resolve to set out afresh. There is hope for you yet. Carry a Bible with you, read it, and make it your councillor, comforter, and companion. You have neglected religion, and your sins have found you out. You are in imminent danger of becoming worse instead of better for the change. Bad companions may have been your ruin. You will now be removed from their circle, but unless you are firm, you will find worse associates where you are going. You have neglected religion, and this has been your bane. Now take it up, and it will not only reclaim and reform you, but it will be your friend in reference to things seen and temporal, as well as to things eternal. If you are wise, you will turn the dire necessity of leaving

your country into a means of obtaining the signal blessing of the salvation of your soul. I knew a youth, the son of an eminent, holy minister, who ran a profligate course till his crimes cast him as a convict upon the shores of a foreign land, but he then reflected upon his course, became penitent, and died, I hope, a sincere Christian. Nor is this the only case of the same kind I have known. Even our penal colonies, notwithstanding the enormities of the transportation system, have thus furnished instances of reclaimed convicts, who have risen to respectability and wealth. The veriest outcast of society may recover. Reformation is not impossible in the worst of cases.

But there may be another kind of necessity that is driving you away from your native shores. You have failed at the outset of life. Your prospects have faded, and now, with the hope of repairing your broken fortune, you are going to a foreign land. If this has happened through your own misconduct, you must be humbled before God, and invoke his forgiveness; and when you have done this, but not till then, you may seek his blessing upon the step you are taking. Employ much of your time also in a severe inquiry into your habits. Detect, as you easily may, the cause of failure, and determine to remove it. The same cause, if carried to a distant land, will produce the same effects there. Change of country will not be of the slightest benefit to you without a change of conduct. Indolence and extravagance will as certainly bring ruin in Austral Asia as in England. You must and you may alter. A new sphere of action will present an opportunity for alteration, and new motives for effort. But

should your failure be the result of no fault of yours trust in God. Earnestly pray for his help and blessing. Leave your country with hope. It may be that you have neglected religion in your happier days. If so, now take it up. I say to you also, carry with you a Bible, and a few religious books. Have the moral courage not to be ashamed of being seen with those silent companions. You will find many on board who will ridicule you, but shall they laugh you out of your convictions? Will you be afraid of a sneer, when your soul and salvation are at stake? Do not put off the subject of religion till you land. This will be to ensure the neglect of it. Your mind will then be so hurried in seeking employment, and be so taken up with the novelties of a foreign country, as to have little leisure or inclination for attending to spiritual things. With religion in your heart, you may step ashore in New Zealand or in America, with the hope that God will befriend you in the land of your adoption; and that the tide of your affairs will there turn in your favour.

But by far the largest class of emigrants is composed of those who go out from the spirit of adventure, with a hope of doing better for themselves abroad than at home. Here every department of action is so crowded, competition is so fierce, and situations of advantage are so rare, that they have little hope of success at home, and turn their attention to one or other of our rising colonies. I know not that such persons are to be blamed; and yet it is a step to be taken with much deliberation, caution, and prayer. Where a young man has an opportunity of doing well for himself in his own country, there seems no reason, except it be inor-

dinate ambition or love of adventure, to lead him to another land. Neither of these impulses is an adequate one for expatriation. There will always be found a sufficient number of those who really are not doing very well here and could do a great deal better abroad, to keep up the stream of emigration, without those going who are doing well at home. There is great wisdom in the advice to "let well alone." A love of change is a dark portent in the character of any young man. He that goes abroad for this, will soon come back again from the same impulse. There is nothing which a young man should more earnestly dread, nothing he should more assiduously watch against, nothing he should more resolutely resist, than versatility: it will be fatal to all his hopes and prospects. Still there are very many cases in which it is not only justifiable, but even commendable, to emigrate: and when the character and conduct are good, where there are those qualities of mind which are likely to make the individual a blessing to the land to which he is going, as well as a benefit to his own family and fortune, I cannot but approve the decision.

II. Having thus distinguished between the different classes of emigrants, I shall now speak of their trials. In most cases there is the separation from friends. Not unfrequently the emigrant has to tear himself from the arms and fond embrace of a loving and beloved mother, and from the warm grasp of an affectionate father; and he who has outgrown or outlived all sensibilities of this nature, gives poor evidence of right feeling of any kind, and holds out faint hope of being likely to obtain God's blessing upon his

future course. Adieu is always a sad sound, when parents and children, brothers and sisters, are parting; but especially when, in all probability, they are parting for ever. And besides this, is it nothing to expatriate ourselves from our native land? Why, the irrational creatures love the spot of their birth and their early dwelling; and this is an instinct which man shares with them. It is long before the charms of those expressions cease to be felt, "My country and my father's house." I can fancy the thoughtful emigrant watching from the deck of his vessel, with tearful eyes and intense feeling, the receding shores of his native land; seeing her green fields and white cliffs, her steeples and her houses, becoming more and more dim; straining his eyes still to see the last speck of land that is distinctly visible; and then looking upon the mighty waste of waters, till in an agony he exclaims, "I have seen the last of the land of my fathers!" Then comes the voyage, its length, its inconvenience, its hard fare and want of accommodations, its sea-sickness and other indescribable annoyances, its often disagreeable companions and uncongenial society. These things end, only to be exchanged, in many cases, for trials of another kind. Oh, for a man to light upon a new world, alike unknowing and unknown; to be a stranger in a strange land, with no one to recognize or smile upon him; to be informed that some whom he expected to welcome him on these distant shores are either dead or removed to another place; and to meet no one to stretch out the hand of friendship, or to give the kiss of love; to have to seek employment where perhaps the labour

market is overstocked, and to be long without finding occupation; to see his little stock of money well-nigh spent without any means of replenishing it; to find all his dreams of colonial prosperity nothing but dreams, and see all his hopes of immediate success, so long and so confidently cherished, vanish like the baseless fabric of a vision; to discover too late, or at any rate to begin to think, he has made a mistake in leaving his native country! These, all these, are among the trials which many of our emigrants have to endure. And even where their trials are not altogether of so dreary an aspect as this, yet are they, except in rare cases, many more and far greater than the most sober calculation had expected. A very large proportion of settlers have their lot cast in such thinly peopled spots, as to be miles from their nearest neighbour, and have to endure so many privations as to be reduced to the barest necessaries of existence. If the man be a Christian, who loves the house of God, the means of grace, the ministry of the word, the oversight and conversation of a faithful pastor, and the fellowship of saints, he feels in addition the deprivation of all these. To hear a sermon he must travel miles, and to break the bread of communion with the saints he must travel still further. Such are but a few of the trials of an emigrant's life. I could tell a tale of woe connected with some who have gone out from my own church, which would harrow up your feelings to a degree of intense suffering. Not however that affliction often falls with such weight as in the case to which I allude. Such things should make you cautious how you determine to encounter them, and should

prepare your mind for the struggle, by laying up a good store of consolation for the evil day. And what can this be but religion? The trials of very many emigrants are fewer and lighter than I have described; and I have drawn the picture thus darkly, not to prevent emigration, or to fill the mind which has resolved on it with dark misgivings, but to check that proneness to think a foreign shore a fairy land in which so many indulge. The danger lies on the side of thinking too lightly of the trials of such a life, and not preparing for them, rather than on the side of having too gloomy an apprehension of them.

III. It is the part of fidelity to remind you of your dangers. It would not be kind to attempt to fill your mind with the perils of the ocean, and the dangers of shipwreck, or the other casualties of a voyage. Nor is it probable that you will be called to a calamity so fearful. I know not the proportion of fatal voyages to successful ones, but I should suppose they are not as one to a hundred, so that apprehension of this kind need not greatly alarm you. Still, your vessel may founder at sea, or be wrecked on some foreign shore, and it is well, by sincere and humble piety, to be prepared for the worst. Religion will enable you to meet death at sea in the storm, as well as in the calm on dry land. An eminent Christian minister, in the prospect of a voyage, when contemplating the possibility of shipwreck, recorded thus his feelings under the possibility of such a catastrophe: "How willingly should I embrace that wave, which instead of landing me at Liverpool, should land me in heaven." Mr. Mackenzie, who was lost in the Pe-

gasus, on his way from Leith to London, was seen when the vessel was sinking, divested of all fear for himself, calmly directing the minds of his perishing fellow-passengers to look by faith to Jesus, and thus prepare for that eternity on which in a few moments they were about to enter. See what religion can do for its possessors amidst the roar of the tempest and when the ocean is opening its mouth to swallow them up. Could you thus hopefully and peacefully descend into a watery grave? But death sometimes comes on board an emigrant ship which escapes the tempest. To die at sea is no uncommon thing. Death, like its Omnipotent Lord and Conqueror, often walks the waves, and approaches the affrighted mariners, and steps on board the vessel, but to confirm, not as in the case of Jesus on the lake of Gennesareth to relieve, the fears of those who watch his approach. To a good man there is nothing very terrible in this. True it is that the ocean is not the house, nor a ship the chamber, in which any one would choose to endure his last sickness and meet the last enemy. But a believing sense of God's presence and love, and the prospect of a glorious immortality, can make death easy even there. And the real Christian can endure without dismay the thought of sleeping in the bottom of the ocean, amidst the monsters of the deep, instead of in a sepulchre on dry land, assured that at the resurrection morning, "the sea will give up the dead which are in it."

These however are not the greatest or most imminent dangers to which you will be exposed, or those of which you should be most afraid, or against which you

need to be most impressively and anxiously warned by your friends. Perils of a moral kind, and fearful ones, will beset your path. What a mixture of society is to be found in every emigrant ship that floats its living cargo to a distant shore! There you will probably find the vicious of both sexes; the infidel, the debauchee, the gambler, the drunkard; the men of all principles, and of no principle; the men of bankrupt fortune and, what is worse, of bankrupt character. And not unlikely "the strange woman" will be there "whose lips drop as a honeycomb, and whose mouth is smoother than oil, but whose end (to you as well as to herself, if you are ensnared by her) is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword; whose feet go down to death, and her steps take hold of hell," with those also whom she inveigles. In the best appointed ships will be found persons who, if you associate with them, will imperil your morals, and may ruin your character and your hopes for both worlds. An association of this kind once formed, you cannot avoid its contaminating influence for a single day. You cannot get away from it if you would. The tempter is ever in sight, always at your elbow and your ear. There is no wider range for you to move in than the vessel which contains you both. The danger is thus greater than can be described or imagined. It will follow you ashore; it will affect your character and conduct when you land, and influence all your future destiny. If then you have the least regard to your welfare, be vigilant, be cautious. Go to the scene of danger aware of it, and look up to God to preserve you. Pray to him to spread over you the shield of his omnipotence.

Should you, however, escape this danger on board ship, it will meet you on your landing. Our colonies are not only a field of enterprise for adventurers, whether they be the sober and industrious seeking a legitimate and ample scope for their energies and their hopes, or the reckless and desperate throwing the dice for their last chance; but also the retreat of the prodigal and the profligate, where they may hide their shame, and pursue their vicious career unknown and unobstructed. In addition to this, there is in our penal colonies the infection diffused by the convicts. In these situations a young man viciously disposed will have every opportunity for gratifying his animal appetites, unrecognised by friends, and unrestrained by strangers.

But there are also dangers of another type than these. In a country the population of which, even as regards its better portions, is to a certain extent a vast company of adventurers, who are all beginning life afresh and struggling hard amidst many difficulties to root themselves in the land of their adoption, there is likely to be acquired a peculiar hardness and selfishness of character, very unfriendly to the tender affections of the heart, the amenities of life, and the feelings and purposes of religion. The thorns of worldly cares, and the stony ground of earthly-mindedness, are but too common every where, but especially there, and they prevent the growth of the good seed of piety and virtue. Failures are common, sound principle is soon undermined, and in the hard struggle and anxious effort for success, every object but such as pertain to the present world is lost sight of. The flattering pic-

tures of colonial life and prosperity, which the imagination of many had drawn, in which they dreamed of immediate and certain success, without fear and almost without labour, are all found to be illusions of the fancy, and they are ready to lie down in despair, or to adopt any course, however dishonourable, or even dishonest, not indeed to gain a fortune, which was once their expectation, but a bare living, which is now their highest indeed only hope. How unfavourable is such a situation to the cultivation of piety, or even of virtue!

To all this must now be added the new temptations and perils which the discovery of the gold deposits has thrown in the way of emigrants. The stream of population, swollen and quickened in its course, is flowing with dangerous rapidity towards the auriferous regions, floating some to prosperity, but more to ruin for both worlds. It will prove a fatal maelstroom to multitudes. Guard against the influence of these new visions of wealth. Let not your imaginations be filled with the day-dreams and fascinations of this modern El Dorado; nor allow yourselves to be allured by eager anticipations to its golden shores. That Providence has some great ends to be answered by this new chapter in our world's history there can be no doubt; and that some must be employed as instruments to work out its plans is equally clear. But be you not in haste to press into its service. Let the tales of hardship, and of disease, and of death, and of failure, which come from the "diggings," cool the ardour produced by the reports of sudden wealth, and balance the gainful side of the account. Think of the peril to charac-

ter which is produced by such a state of things; the lust of gold, the selfishness of disposition, the jealousy and envy, the grasping covetousness, or the reckless extravagance, and the all but certain neglect of everything but gold, which even success is likely to produce. Such a state of society is the worst possible mould in which character can be formed. Avoid it therefore, and be contented with avocations which, if they are far less lucrative, are at the same time far less perilous. If however your course should seem to lie that way, enter upon the scene of dangers duly aware of its perils, and looking up to God for protection, and combining watchfulness with prayer. To persons in such a situation the question applies with awful and alarming force, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" What carries the danger of all this to the highest pitch is the absence, in many parts of our colonies, especially in the gold regions, of the means of grace, the ordinances of public worship, the fellowship of saints, and the oversight of ministers. How difficult is it here, even in this highly favoured land, with the aid of all these, to keep down sin, and to maintain a due regard to the claims of religion and morality! But how much worse would things be without them! There can be no question that the observance of the Sabbath, the power of the pulpit, and the restraint of christian example, tend greatly to moralise and purify the life even where they do not renew the heart, to restrain the sinner where they do not convert him, and to keep down the overflowings of ungodliness where they do not spread out

the beauties of holiness. It is true that through the voluntary energies of almost all denominations of professing Christians, the deficiency of the means of grace, in our principal colonies, is being in some considerable measure supplied. But still how many emigrants are there who go out into the wild, who are not within a day's journey of a place of christian worship, and scarcely hear a sermon in a year!

> "Oh, think of those who pine to hear,
> Far from their native shores exiled,
> A pastor's voice amidst the wild."

What is there in such circumstances to aid the struggles of the soul after good principles and habits here, or salvation hereafter? And even where the means of grace are within reach, they are it must be confessed too often of that feeble and inefficient character, which renders them neither attractive nor influential. Such then are some of the dangers to which the emigrant is exposed.

IV. I now proceed to offer him some counsels and directions. There are, as regards religion, two distinct classes of emigrants. There are some who are not living under the influence of true religion. Some of you, who read these pages, answer too justly to this description. You know you are not yet brought to repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: that you are not yet led to acknowledge God in all your ways, to live habitually in his fear and favour, and to enjoy the comforts of the Holy Spirit. Going out from your own country to a foreign land, without the guidance of religion! Going to encounter the perils of the ocean, and the dangers of shipwreck,

without the support of religion! Going to quit the home of your fathers, and sojourn in a strange land, without the companionship of religion! Going to encounter all the trials, perplexities, and difficulties of an emigrant's life, without the consolations of religion! How forlorn a condition! How desolate a lot! No acknowledgment of God; no trust in Him, no prayer to Him, no communion with Him, no expectation from Him. No preparation of mind to see His immensity shadowed forth in the boundless expanse of the ocean; to hear his awful power, grandeur, and majesty proclaimed in the tempest, the thunderstorm, and the water-spout; to trace his wisdom and goodness in the varied products of new countries; to contemplate his glory and realise his presence everywhere! Unhappy man! You are indeed to be pitied. The world is all before you, but Providence is not invoked to be your guide, and direct you where to choose. Oh, pause and ponder upon your condition, and the ways of your feet. Will you, dare you, can you, go out without God? Without God to guide, and protect, and bless you! And if without God as a friend, with him as an enemy. Do you forget it is God's world you live in, and God's country to which you are going? And how can you think of going to it without asking his leave, imploring his guidance, and seeking his blessing? Recollect, you are dependent every moment upon him, and all your future destiny is to be decided by him. He can raise you to prosperity, or depress you to the lowest adversity. He can frustrate or promote all your schemes; disappoint or realise all your hopes. Before you quit your native shore then yield your-

selves unto God, "Remember your Creator now, in the days of your youth, before the evil days come." You are busy in preparing for the voyage, and engaged in the cares of the outfit. Religion, true, vital, experimental, decided religion, is the best preparation, the most important outfit. Determine, by God's grace, not to leave your country an enemy to him, lest he send the whirlwind as his messenger to arrest you on the sea, or ruin to overtake you on the dry land. Go forth rather as his servant, his friend, and his son, that to you may be applied the beautiful language of the poet:

> His are the mountains: and the valleys his:
> His the resplendent rivers: his to call,
> With a propriety that none can claim,
> But he who lifts an unpresumptuous eye,
> And smiling says, 'My Father made them all.'

Let the voice of friendship prevail, and the anxiety of ministerial fidelity be successful in persuading you immediately to be reconciled to God through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Present, in sincerity and earnestness, the prayer of Moses, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." You will not ask in vain, for the answer will come, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." You will leave all other friends behind you, but your best Friend will go with you, and he will be more to you than father, mother, brother, and sister. Should you determine to act upon this advice, then all which will now be addressed to the next class of exiles will also appertain to you.

Many emigrants are already true Christians, and

will go out as such. To this class I now address myself, with affectionate solicitude for their welfare in both worlds. First of all I would make a few remarks in the way of consolation. In your present circumstances you need it, and you may have it. I trust you have the peace which arises from the testimony of your conscience, that in leaving your country you are following the leadings of Providence, and that you see the cloudy pillar moving before you; that it is a lawful object that you are pursuing, and one on which you may confidently ask God's blessing. This settled, you have in that one thought, "I am where God led me," a world of consolation. In the wreck of either your vessel or your fortunes, you may then be calm and satisfied, for no remorse will increase your terrors or aggravate your sorrows. Next you may, and should, reflect with comfort upon the omnipresence of God. This is one of the main props of all religion, whether in the way of holy fear or sacred pleasure; whether with angels in heaven or with man upon earth. It was the saying of a Jewish Rabbi, "If every man would consider God to be the great eye of the world, watching perpetually over all our actions, and that his hand is indefatigable, and his ear ever open, possibly sin might be extirpated from the face of the earth." This is going too far, but it is impressive. Yes, God is everywhere present, though invisible to us. Were the emigrant to leave his God, when he left his country, what crowds of sinners would flee from the presence of the Lord, and escape from the vigilance of his watchful eye! But what Christian would go? Pious youth, God goes with you, wherever you go, he is there

before you in all the glory of his attributes, in all the tenderness of his love, in all the faithfulness of his promises, and in all the watchfulness of his providence. Be this your comfort, you cannot flee from his presence. And as God goes with you, so does your gracious Redeemer, in all his offices, characters, and endearments. So does the Holy Spirit with all his influences, so does your Bible, so does the throne of grace, so does the fellowship of saints, at least to most places. You thus carry your best friends, your richest treasures, your dearest comforts, your safest protection with you. Without these no sun would be bright, no scenery beautiful, no air balmy, no society agreeable, and no success joyful; but with these, consolation may be found on the most desolate shores, and in the most dreary scenes of nature or amidst the most afflictive dispensations of Providence. All places are equally near to heaven, and equally accessible to the falling rays which even now descend from its glory. On board the ship, amidst a wicked crew and noisy passengers, he can be with you; and equally so in the rough population of some colonial town, or in the dreary wild of some colonial desert. In the deepest solitude you may use the language which the poet has put into the lips of Alexander Selkirk:

> "There's mercy in every place,
> And mercy (encouraging thought!)
> Gives even affliction a grace,
> And reconciles man to his lot."

You remember perhaps the anecdote of Mungo Park, the African traveller, which I have given in my work entitled, "The Young Man from Home." He was in

the heart of Africa, alone and unprotected. He had just been robbed and stripped by ferocious banditti, and the following is the account he gives of his feelings and his relief: "After they were gone, I sat for some time, looking around me with amazement and terror. Whichever way I turned, nothing appeared but danger and difficulty. I saw myself in the midst of a vast wilderness, in the depth of the rainy season, naked and alone, surrounded by savage animals, and men still more savage. I was five hundred miles from the nearest European settlement. All these circumstances crowded at once on my recollection, and I confess that my spirit began to fail me. I considered my fate as certain, and that I had no alternative but to lie down and perish. The influence of religion, however, aided and supported me. I reflected that no human prudence or foresight could possibly have averted my present sufferings. I was indeed a stranger in a strange land, yet I was still under the protecting eye of that Providence who has condescended to call himself the stranger's friend. At this moment, painful as my reflections were, the extraordinary beauty of a small moss in fructification irresistibly caught my eye. I mention this to show from what trifling circumstances the mind will sometimes derive consolation; for, though the whole plant was not larger than the top of one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots, leaves, and capsule, without admiration. Can that Being, thought I, who planted, watered, and brought to perfection, in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the

situation and suffering of creatures formed after his own image? Surely not! Reflections like these would not allow me to despair. I started up, and disregarding both hunger and fatigue, travelled forwards, assured that relief was at hand: and I was not disappointed. In a short time, I came to a small village, at the entrance of which I overtook the two shepherds who had come with me from Koama. They were much surprised to see me; for they said they never doubted that the Foulahs, when they had robbed, had murdered me."

But let me now offer you some counsels. Taken away from the means of grace, to which you have been accustomed, you will be in danger of resembling a child weaned at too early an age, which droops and sickens for want of its mother's milk. On your voyage you will find nothing around you to sustain your faith and godliness, but every thing adverse to them. For months your Sabbath exercises will perhaps be nothing more than listening to a few prayers, or a sermon, formally, coldly and carelessly read. You will perhaps meet with no one who can talk with you the language of Canaan, and fan by his conversation and prayers the languid flame of your devotion. You will therefore be in imminent peril of losing much of your religion on the voyage. To guard against this, it is well you should take a calm and intelligent view of your situation. In this case, as well as in others, to be fore-warned is to be fore-armed. Be much in prayer, in earnest wrestling and believing prayer, before you step on board. Intensely long to be kept, and then you will be kept. God can and will make his grace

sufficient for you. He can preserve you, and will, if you desire it, though there is not another Christian in the ship. He will be the lifter up of your head, will sustain you by his power through faith, and will put his glory upon you.

Do not be ashamed of your religion. Much future annoyance and embarrassment will be prevented by a bold and honest, yet meek and humble, avowal of your principles. The first check given in a new phase or aspect of life is that which is most to be dreaded. Decision, maintained with firmness but gentleness, will soon subdue opposition. Your persecutors, if such you should have, will not be slow to find out that their ridicule is expended to no purpose on one who is not affected by it, and who always returns good for evil. But for this moral and spiritual courage, you must be much in prayer. "Of the ichneumon it is stated, that when wounded by the serpent with which it is in conflict, or previously to renewing the conflict, it retires by instinct to a particular herb, for expelling whatever venom it has received, and to be invigorated with fresh strength for obtaining the victory. Sanctify the thought by your frequent retirement to God for aid in the war-strife in which you may be engaged with sin in its various forms around you, and its most subtle insinuations in your own breast."* Fear not, then, to be seen with your Bible and other good books. Let your piety be neither ostentatiously obtruded, nor timidly concealed. At first it would be well to say little about it to others, till you have gained their confidence and affection. Let there be no bustling and

* "The Christian Emigrant," by Dr. Leifchild.

officious zeal, no attempt to take the ship's company by storm, nothing like parading your religion and proclaiming your intention to convert all on board. This will defeat your purpose by raising up resistance. Your light must shine before your fellow passengers by your good works, and your religion must be seen in all its loveliness and consistency before it is heard. Be known as the humble, meek, and gentle follower of the Lamb, the friend of every one, the enemy of no one. If you can find men of like mind on board, cultivate their acquaintance, and live in sweet fellowship with them. If they have their peculiarities, as probably they will have, bear with them in love. Let there be the best understanding between you and them; for the quarrels, or even the coolness, of professing Christians, will do immense harm.

Take especial care that your conduct be uniformly consistent. When it is known, and known it ought to be, that you are a religious man, you will be watched by the malignant eyes of many who will wait for your halting, and will tax their ingenuity to lay snares for your feet. One wrong step will destroy all your influence, by defacing the beauty and impairing the strength of your example, and will subject not only yourself, but all religion, to the suspicion of hypocrisy. You may hope, by acting in a blameless and harmless manner, to be the means of doing good to some of your fellow emigrants. You may discover some pensive and sorrow-stricken heart, prepared by deep sorrow to receive the consolations of the gospel. Or you may find some prodigal already beginning to ponder with remorse on his wanderings, in whose

relenting heart you may fasten conviction, penitence, and faith. You may be honoured of God thus to "convert a sinner from the error of his ways, to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Should you escape the moral dangers of the voyage, and land upon a distant shore unharmed in soul, you must not consider that all, or even the greatest, perils are over. There still remain all the trials to which you will be exposed in the struggle to be carried on for establishing yourself in the colony. Many have escaped the shipwreck of the sea, only to incur the more fearful one, not only of their fortune, but of their character. Professors who have stood well at home, have miserably failed abroad. In the eager struggle which you will perhaps carry on for success in your new locality, where so many are striving with you and like you, there is a fear lest the ardour of religious affection should be quenched in a flood of earthly-mindedness; and lest the purity of religious principle should be debased by the love and the prospect of Mammon's pelf, especially in the gold regions. It has been said, with what truth I will not take upon me to determine, that very lax principles of morality govern the trade of some of our colonies; and that many professing Christians are carried away by the stream of commercial dishonesty. Doubtless therefore many have damaged their characters, however they may have improved their circumstances. "The transplanted tree may exhibit as flourishing a foliage in the new soil where it is fixed; but if its fruit become dwarfed, insipid, and tasteless, the change is one that will ever have to be deplored. Let your piety, on the

contrary, take a deeper root, and strike out wider its fruit-bearing branches in the locality where you may be destined to spend the remainder of your days."

A Christian ought to be anxious to promote the moral and spiritual well-being of the colony to which he emigrates. The best way to preserve his own religion is to keep it in action. Still water, as I have previously remarked, breeds filth and vermin, but the running stream is clear and pure. Neither our soul's health, nor our body's, can be preserved without exercise. But there is another reason, my young friends, which I press upon your attention, why you should be active in diffusing religion where you go, and that is the future destiny of the colonies. What is a colony? Now indeed the collection, from various parts of the earth, of a comparatively few adventurers, settling down upon the coast with a view to retrieve their fortunes or their characters, or to start in life with advantages there which they could not command at home; but what will it be a century or two hence? It is an infant state, a nation in boyhood, which, when full grown, may be a rival of the land that gave it existence. A little more than two centuries ago, a few outcasts and fugitives from this country, flying from the demon of persecution, landed from the "Mayflower," on a bare and barren rock on the northern coast of America. The country all around was bleak, desolate, and wild, and inhabited only by tribes of Indians and herds of buffaloes. There was a colony. What is it now! The greatest, the strongest, the most flourishing republic ever founded upon earth; a republic which is already the rival

in trade of the fatherland, and which has more than once been engaged with it successfully in war. It is thought by some that England has passed the zenith of its glory, and that the British empire is destined to decay and fall; that its population will remain stationary or recede; its courage abate, its wealth diminish, and its ascendancy disappear; till at length the Queen of the Waves will sink into an eternal, though not forgotten, slumber. And the question has been asked whether, at some future period in our world's history, and amidst the changes which take place in its affairs, some traveller from New Zealand or Australia may not sit down upon a broken arch of London Bridge, to depict the ruins of St. Paul's Cathedral; or place himself where he shall delineate "the towers of York Minster rising in dark magnificence amid an aged forest; or go and trace the red deer sporting in savage independence round the Athenian pillars of the Scottish metropolis." This is not very probable; but if it should be in the decrees of heaven and the destinies of earth, let it be your care who go as Christian emigrants to these future nations which are to be exalted in majesty over the ruins of their parent country, that they shall be so educated in their infancy as to rise up Christian states in their manhood. Go out with the holy and noble ambition of carrying on the work of evangelization, civilization, and refinement. Be the patriots of your new country; and have your names enrolled among those to whom its future generations shall look back with gratitude and respect. Carry out the principles of civil and religious liberty, and never forget

that as you are joining with others in laying the foundations of civil polity, it should be done with care and skill, and so that they may bear a superstructure in which God shall dwell with man upon the earth. A high and holy object of ambition is thus presented to you. Seize in all its grandeur and extent the conception that you are assisting in constructing the basis of future nations, and let not even the modesty and humility which are the natural result, and should be the accompaniments, of your comparatively humble circumstances in life, dispossess you of it. Even the day labourers who worked at the foundation of the Pyramids had a share in raising a fabric which has been the admiration of all ages, and will probably last till the end of time. So the humblest emigrant that lands on the shore of Australia, if he be a man of piety, virtue, and active benevolence, is doing something towards the wealth, the power, and the moral glory of the future state that may rise in that now comparatively unpeopled wilderness.

In connection with all this, and indeed for its realization, it is necessary you should attend to some other things. I refer you to the last chapter for what you will need as a man of business, and what is essential to your success. The knowledge, industry, economy, system, and perseverance, there recommended, necessary for all, are pre-eminently so for you. Without your determining to act thus, there is not the remotest hope of your success. If you expect to do without these endowments in a foreign land, you are mistaken. Give up at once all notion that

less qualification for success is necessary in the colonies than at home. The earth does not bring forth her fruits spontaneously there, even in a virgin soil, any more than here. The ground is cursed for man's sake all over the globe; and to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow is the condition of your existence in Australia and New Zealand, as well as in England.

You must make up your mind to hardships unknown at home. He that expects to carry to a new settlement, in any part whatever of the world, all the luxuries, or even comforts, which he may command here, and who is not prepared to endure much self-denial, had better remain where he is. It is true, in the towns already formed in some of the colonies, most of the usual comforts of life may be commanded as well as in this country; but an emigrant cannot always choose his abode, and may be called to go beyond the circle of population, where he will have to construct his own dwelling, to make great part of his own furniture, to cook his own food; and you should consider well whether this will suit you, or you it. A spirit of adventure, where it exists, a buoyancy of spirits, a love of enterprise, and a hope of success, will carry a man through all these difficulties; but have you these qualifications?

Guard against a reckless spirit of speculation. Do not make haste to be rich. This is one of the dangers of colonial life, dangerous alike to moral principle and to commercial prosperity. There is great room for it abroad, and many temptations to it. It has made a few, but it has ruined many. Some have endeavoured to leap the chasm or ford the river, without patiently

going round by the bridge, and have succeeded; while others in making the same attempt have been dashed to pieces or drowned. Speculation is a game at hazard. Do not play it. One throw of the die may win a fortune, but the next may lose it. Be contented to plod on slowly, but certainly. What is gained by patient industry usually wears better and lasts longer than that which is won in a lottery.

Especially watch against a want of commercial principle. In the fierce conflict for success in a young settlement, this is one of the dangers to which all who enter into it are exposed. Go out determined to follow the "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report." Make up your mind to the truth of God's holy word, that "Better is the little that a righteous man hath, than the riches of many wicked." Failure is to be infinitely preferred, when it comes with a good conscience, than success procured by iniquity. As a general principle it will be found true that "honesty is the best policy."

Keep up correspondence with some in your native country, especially if you have left in it friends who take an interest in your welfare. There is something immoral and unchristian in a disposition to forget the home and friends of your childhood, and something positively cruel, in keeping your parents, brothers and sisters, ignorant of your circumstances. This is sometimes not sufficiently thought of by those who leave their country. But the soil in which early and home affections all wither and die, cannot be favourable to the growth of piety or virtue; it is cold and stony.

Be very cautious about choosing your companions.

Characters of all varieties, and many of them of the worst kinds, are to be found in the colonies. How many are obliged to emigrate, and find in those distant retreats a shelter from the finger of scorn, the tongue of reproach, and, in some cases, from the visitations of justice; men who go out unreclaimed, and who carry all their bad principles and evil dispositions with them! Many of them are clever, specious and plausible; but they carry the serpent's cunning and venom under the variegated colours of his skin. Never give your company, your ear, your hand, or your confidence, to any one, till you have proved that he is worthy of them. A stranger in a strange land, you will feel your loneliness, and in your craving after social intercourse, will be in danger of falling into the snares of those who lie in wait to deceive. One of the members of my church, who carried out with him a considerable sum of money, gave his confidence, and with it a considerable portion of his property, to one who professed for him great friendship; and but for most determined proceedings would have lost it. Men prowling about society to prey on the unwary, are to be found everywhere, and they are not wanting in the colonies.

And now let me direct the attention of all to what the apostle has said of the holy patriarchs of Canaan, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful

of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Be this the view you take of your earthly sojourn, as a pilgrimage to the skies; and this the spirit you cherish in reference to it. Your circumstances forcibly remind you of it. By faith in God's blessed word, look up to that better country which is above and beyond the boundaries of earth and time: the land of the holy, the good, and the blessed; where there is no more sea, and where there shall be no more death, or sorrow, or crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things shall have passed away; where the fears, the anxieties, and the labours of this world have no place, and the turmoil of life, and the strifes of business are unknown; where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest; where temptation will be over, and conflict will cease. Blessed country! Be it your chief solicitude to emigrate to that joyful and glorious land. From this world you must depart. No choice is left you. The hour of your departure draws on; but whether it will be in youth, manhood, or old age, is known only to God. Shall there be no preparation for that voyage and settlement? How much your thoughts are now occupied about the new country to which you are going, and how anxiously busy you are in preparing for the voyage and your future residence: and shall less thoughtfulness, less preparation, less anxiety be given to the emigration to eternity? You have exercised much thought in

choosing the colony where you mean to settle for life. There are but two places of settlement beyond the grave, heaven and hell; between these lies your choice; to one or other you must soon depart? which will you choose? Which!

CHAPTER X.

DISAPPOINTMENT OR FULFILMENT OF PARENTAL HOPES.

And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands. GENESIS v, 28, 29.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! 2 SAMUEL xviii, 33.

WHEN Lamech, one of the few antediluvians mentioned in the fifth chapter of Genesis, selected a name for his son, he determined to call him Noah, which signifies "rest;" for he said, "This same shall comfort us concerning our labour." The history of this Lamech is involved in impenetrable obscurity, as the Bible only names him elsewhere. But you are not to confound him with the Lamech mentioned in the preceding chapter, who was a descendent of Cain. It would seem that in naming his son, Lamech the father of Noah was guided by a reference to some circumstances of disquiet, either peculiarly connected with his own life, or common to all his generation,

of which no mention is made in the Scriptures. But whether the selection of the name was the result of prophetic inspiration, or merely of parental hope, we cannot tell. The event however justified the selection, and the life of Noah answered to his name. With his early history the Author of revelation has left us almost entirely unacquainted. All that is said of him before he is introduced to us as the patriarch of the new world's inhabitants is, that "Noah walked with God, and was perfect in his generation." In the midst of a corrupt age he dared to be singular, and was not ashamed or afraid to avow his piety amidst the scoffs of the impious. For five centuries his parents lived to witness his holy conduct, and his high calling as the preacher of righteousness, and the preserver of the human race from utter destruction. What a lengthened period of parental enjoyment!*

A melancholy contrast is presented to all this in

* We are not permitted to know all God's reasons for the extreme longevity of the Patriarchs of the antediluvian world. But we can see that it tended, by oral tradition, to preserve uncorrupted the original revelation made to our first parents in Paradise. At that time, most probably, alphabetic writing was unknown; and it was important that the transmission of the account of creation, of the origin of the human race, of the primeval prophecy concerning the seed of the woman, and of the divine institution of sacrifice, should pass through as few hands as possible. It is not absolutely certain that this extreme longevity was granted to any but the persons mentioned in the book of Genesis; if it was, there may have been reasons for this extraordinary length of human life before the flood, with which we are not acquainted. This is one of the many things of revelation which we must take upon its own well-accredited testimony, without making our experience or observation a standard by which to try them, or a reason for rejecting them.

the history of Absalom. His name signifies "the father of peace." Alas, alas, what a contradiction was there between his history and his name! He was evidently his father's favourite son. We discern and condemn the weakness of David, whose partiality was, in all probability, called forth by the extraordinary beauty of Absalom, an unworthy motive. He gave him a name expressive of his fondest wishes and affections. He watched with more than ordinary interest and regard the development of his beautiful form, the increasing attractions of his winning and fascinating manners, the nobleness of his bearing, and the displays of his genius. Even Solomon was little thought of compared with Absalom. In this favourite David's hopes at one time centered more than in all his other children. But this bright blossom of parental fondness and expectation soon exhibited signs of blight, and the sequel became another melancholy instance of the effects of a father's injudicious and misdirected partiality. With Absalom's personal beauty was associated a most vicious character, which wrung his father's heart with anguish. He manifested one enormity after another, till his misconduct rose to a climax by rebellion, and parricide in intention, and brought him to an untimely end. What a bitter and cruel disappointment of parental hopes was there! The darling, the beautiful Absalom, proved a libertine, a murderer, and a rebel: a character which, notwithstanding all the father's lingering affection and fond precautions, brought the unhappy son to his grave in infamy and blood. Instead of his remains reposing in the splendid mausoleum which his vanity had con-

structed, and by which he ambitiously hoped to perpetuate his fame to future generations, they were buried under a heap of stones, with no funeral obsequies to do honour to his rank, and no inscription to perpetuate his name. But how much it takes to wear out a father's love, and to quench his fondness for a favourite child! No sooner were the tidings announced that Absalom was dead, than all his crimes were forgotten, and the poor afflicted father rushed into his chamber, and uttered one of the most simple and pathetic lamentations which grief ever dictated, or language ever expressed, in those moving words, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" With these two cases, as an historical introduction, I enter upon the consideration of my subject: "The disappointment or fulfilment of parental hopes."

I shall reverse the order of the texts, and dwell first upon the conduct of him who defeats the expectations which have been indulged by those who were the authors of his being. Parental hopes are usually strong. The words of our Lord are in accordance with nature, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more her anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Who but a mother can tell the feelings of the moment when her new-born babe is first laid on her bosom; and who but a father can know the emotions which are excited when he sees, for the first time, his own image reflected in the countenance of that little unconscious creature, whose infant cry, as he takes him in his

arms, seems to say, in inarticulate language, "My Father?" From that moment parental hopes begin. The child brings them with him into the world. How fondly the parents watch their treasure as he is dandled in his mother's lap, or sleeps in his cradle! How often they muse together over his future destinies, saying to each other, "What manner of child shall this be?" As the babe grows to a child, the child to a youth, the youth to manhood, what expectations are raised, what conjectures are formed, what prognostications are uttered! The mother hopes he will be her comfort, the father that he will be his help, and both make him their boast. As his faculties develope, they see, or think they see, (and the fond illusion can be forgiven them,) the marks of ability and the traits of excellence. Freaks of childish passion, instances of waywardness of temper, and not unfrequent acts of disobedience, which to others hold out painful portents, are either unnoticed, or do not disturb the pleasing vision, or lower the expectations of future excellence, if not of eminence. Hope is predominant in the father's heart; all children, he says, have their follies and faults; and his not more than others. He sends his son to school, where he trusts he will improve his mind, and prepare for future life: he apprentices him to some trade or profession, by which he expects he will do well in the world, and starts him in business, and thus enables him to provide for himself and a family. How many hours of private conversation have been spent with his wife over this son of theirs! What pictures have been drawn of his future career! Surely such talents, so

cultivated, and with such advantages, must succeed. Under the burdens of life, and the cares and labours which their family bring upon them, they look forward during the infancy of their children to future years; anticipating the pleasures to arise from the obedience, gratitude, and usefulness of those who they think will be the prop of their old age, and the supporters of each other, when they are gone to their rest. Pleasing reflections! Joyful anticipations! But in many cases vain illusions! How wisely is it ordered that man should not be able to lift up the veil of futurity, and foresee the history of himself and of his children. It is enough to know the ills of life as they arise, without contemplating them in the distance. What a misery to have all these hopes end in bitter disappointment, like beautiful blossoms cut off by a nipping frost! I speak not now of the disappointment which is occasioned by the dispensations of Providence, in the early death of children. This often comes, but how many, under a bitterer disappointment still, have lived to wish their children had died in infancy. And amidst the sins and follies of the after years of their children's lives, have mourned with grief of heart, and exclaimed, "Oh, that my son had died from the womb, and that the cradle had become his coffin, rather than that he should have lived to distress and dishonour me as he has done."

But what is it that will disappoint parental hopes? Undutifulness, and want of affection will do this. Parents have a right granted by nature, confirmed by reason, and enjoined by Scripture, to the obedience, honour, gratitude, and love of their children. They

look for their due, and expect from their offspring everything that can thus conduce to their comfort. And how cutting it is to receive rudeness instead of respect; disobedience instead of submission; contempt instead of esteem; and cold indifference, or manifest dislike, or cruel unkindness, instead of affection and gratitude! Well did Solomon say, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and a bitterness to her that bare him." "Oh, how often," do they say together, "has our authority been affronted, and our love slighted for a mere trifle. We expected better things, and naturally supposed that so much love as we have lavished upon him would have brought us back some love in return. Is this the reward of all our study and efforts to make him happy and do him good?" Oh, who can tell, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is, to have a thankless child?" I believe that deep filial reverence is often the basis of that higher principle, the fear of God; and that, on the contrary, a manifest want of good disposition and good conduct towards parents, must ever be attended with irreligion, and vicious dispositions and habits.

Indolence, want of application, and carelessness about general improvement, must, of course, produce the disappointment I now speak of. After a good school has been selected for a youth, and afterwards a suitable situation for acquiring a knowledge of business, when improvement in general knowledge, and especially the acquisition of a trade, is naturally looked for, then to see nothing but indolence, ignorance, and stupidity; money, time, exhortation all wasted; the youth going forth into the world ill-informed, unskilled

in matters of trade, unfit for any situation of importance as a servant, and equally unfit to manage a business as a master! How mortifying, how disappointing is all this to a father! How distressing for him to find all his schemes thwarted; all his anticipations frustrated; and while other young men are making their way in life, to see his son neither able nor willing to do anything for himself! He may not be vicious, but he is idle, a habit which is next to actual crime, and generally leads to it.

Versatility of disposition also, wherever it exists, defeats the hopes of parents who judge wisely. It is good counsel which Solomon gives, where he says, "Meddle not with them that are given to change." To change when it is from bad to good is always right; and it is a part of wisdom to know when and how to change for the better. This is a different thing from being "given to change." I repeat what I said in the last chapter, that there is nothing against which a young man ought more assiduously to guard than instability of disposition. There is as much truth as beauty in the proverb, "A rolling stone gathers no moss." Reuben's character should be a beacon to all young men, "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel." The man who tries many things, without keeping to any thing, is absolutely certain to do nothing. A tree may sometimes be better for one removal, but it can never flourish under frequent transplanting. How annoying it is to a father to find that he has scarcely introduced a son into a good situation ere the youth gets tired of it and leaves it, and comes back again a dead weight upon his father's hands, till, tired out

with his perpetual changes, the good man is compelled to throw him upon his own resources, in which case he generally comes to ruin.*

Failure in business, however it occurs, must of necessity prove a very painful disappointment to parental hopes. When a father has started his son in business, and advanced capital for the purpose, and expected to see him prosper, it must be a source of very great distress to find that all his efforts to serve him are abortive. Where this is the effect of causes over which even industry and ability have no control, which

* A very lamentable instance of the disappointment of parental hopes, occasioned by an unsettled and roving disposition, happened in the family of that distinguished theologian, the late Rev. Andrew Fuller. His eldest boy was a youth of this character. His father obtained for him a good situation in London. He at one time thought of the ministry, and was then of course a moral, and apparently a religious, young man. His father however soon recorded this remark in his diary: "Alas, alas, I have seen that in the conduct of my poor boy which has almost broken my heart, whose instability is continually appearing. He must leave London, and what to do with him I know not." Another situation was procured in his native town, but his restless disposition soon discovered itself, and he enlisted into the army. In a little time, being understood to be an apprentice, he was discharged. Another situation was found for him, but in vain: for he enlisted a second time, into the marines. His father in compliance with his wishes, procured his liberation; and in about a month he left his new place and friends. Perceiving there was no hope of his settling to business, his sorrowing parent procured him a situation in a merchant ship: but being on shore one Lord's day, before he joined the ship, he was laid hold of by a press-gang, and carried to sea. It was soon reported that the poor boy had been guilty of some offence, had been tried, and sentenced to receive three hundred lashes; that he received them, and immediately expired. Under this trial Mr F. thus wrote to a friend, "Oh! this is heart's trouble! In former cases, my heart found vent in tears; but now I

involve no blame, and which therefore must be resolved into a dispensation of Providence, there is not the aggravation of sorrow which is produced by incapacity, indolence, or extravagance. In such a case a judicious and kind father will comfort his unfortunate son, and cheer him onward, by sympathy and promise of assistance, to make other efforts, though it is of course a trial and a heavy one. But where misconduct has led to the sad result, how bitter is the cup of parental sorrow. For a father to occupy the dreadful post of observation, darker every hour, as he watches the downward progress of a son negligent of his busi-

can seldom weep. A kind of morbid heart-sickness preys upon me from day to day. Every object around me reminds me of him! Ah, he was wicked, and mine eye was not over him to prevent it; he was detected, tried, and condemned, and I knew it not; he cried under his agonies, but I heard him not; he expired without an eye to pity or a hand to help him. Oh, Absalom, my son, my son! would I had died for thee, my son!" The report however was incorrect, yet some time afterwards he deserted, and suffered so severe a punishment as to be totally unfitted for service, by the effect it had upon his health. He was again discharged. He in some measure recovered his health, and a situation was about to be provided for him; but he again absconded, entered a second time into the marines, went to sea, and his friends never saw him again. He died off Lisbon after a lingering illness, and, there is some reason to hope, confessing and lamenting the error of his ways. "This narrative," remarks Mr Fuller's biographer, "contains many things painful to surviving friends, which they would gladly have buried in oblivion, and which I would never have inserted had they absolutely forbidden me. But the strong room there seems to be to hope that so affecting an account may be, under the Divine blessing, the means of reclaiming some unhappy youth under similar circumstances, or of deterring others from rending a parent's heart with anguish, and involving themselves in misery, has induced them to yield to my wish for its not being suppressed."

ness, and giving himself up to habits which must end in his ruin! Oh, miserable son, and miserable parent! He who should and might have been a flourishing tradesman becomes a bankrupt and, instead of rising to respectability, sinks to indigence and contempt. How many fond anticipations are terminated, how many bright visions are dispelled, how many joyous expectations are prostrated by that wreck! And as the hopes of past times are defeated, none can be indulged for the future. Had it been the result of misfortune, the son might have recovered himself; but as the ruin came by misconduct, what ground of hope is left to the disconsolate father?

Profligate conduct is the bitterest disappointment of all. To see a young man who has been religiously educated, and brought up in the fear of God, so far forgetting the instructions, prayers, and examples of his father, and the tears and affectionate entreaties of his mother, as to "walk in the counsel of the ungodly, to stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful:" to see him forming bad associations, neglecting business, indulging his evil propensities, wandering off, like the prodigal, into the paths of vice and profligacy, the slave of lust and wine, how distressingly disappointing is all this! Unhappy parents! You who have been called to endure this trial, and you only, can tell what this means: and even you know it better than you can tell it. "Oh," says the christian parent, "is it then come to this, that all my solicitude, my prayers, my tears for my son, end in his profligacy! That all my desires and expectations that he would become a child of God, terminate in

his being a prodigal! That all my hopes of his being a servant of Christ, at last end in my seeing him a slave of Satan! How carefully have I watched him, how diligently have I instructed him, how earnestly have I prayed for him, how anxiously have I waited for his yielding himself up to God and coming into the fellowship of his Church! And are all my prayers and tears as water spilt upon the ground? In all that I have done for his conversion and salvation I have been labouring in vain, and spending my strength for naught, yea, worse than in vain; for every instruction, correction, and reproof, has aggravated his guilt here, and will increase his misery hereafter; so that while in intention I was acting the most kind and tender part, I was, in the result, only treasuring up for my son wrath against the day of wrath. Alas, alas! Woe is me. 'O my son, my son!'"

How tenfold more dreadful are these reflections if the son has died in his sins, a case by no means uncommon! How painful are the father's tears that his child has fallen into a state of everlasting ruin! "Oh," will the afflicted parent say, "how comparatively light would be my sorrows, if, while looking on his breathless corpse, and mourning the disappointment of my hopes as to the present life, I could by faith look forward to the world of glory, and see the branch of my family, which is cut off from earth, transplanted thither and flourishing there. Joy would then mingle with my paternal sorrows, and praises with my tears. But, alas! I have reason to fear that it was cut down that it might be cast into everlasting burnings. On the former supposition, I might have comforted myself

with the thought of meeting my child again, and of meeting him on terms of infinite advantage, to be no more separated from him. But alas! now I have lost my child, and lost him for ever. Nor is this all. It would be mournful to me to think I should meet him no more; yet as the matter now stands, even that would be some alleviation to my distress; but the immutable decree of God forbids it. I must meet him at the bar of God, and oh! what a dreadful interview will it be. Must I be a witness against him? How terrible an office! To bear my testimony for the condemnation of one whom I tenderly loved, of one whose soul I would have died to deliver. Oh, if no shelter must be allowed him, that God would hide me in the grave till this tremendous scene of His indignation be overpast; lest the anguish of a parent mingle with the joys of a rising saint, and to me overcast the triumphs of the day."*

This disappointment may however take place where none of the former causes exist. There may be no profligacy, no instability, no indolence, no want of cleverness in business, but the very opposites; still there may be, as we have seen in a former chapter, amiability without religion; the possession of all other good things, yet the want of the one best thing. To a really christian parent the want of this in his children is a severe trial, a heavy affliction. This is the chief object of his desires, his prayers, his efforts, and his hopes. Till they are savingly converted to God by his grace, and are brought to live a life of faith in God

* Dr. Doddridge's "Sermons on the Reflections of a Pious Parent over an Ungodly Son."

and in Christ, he is, and must be, disappointed. He longed, above all things, for their salvation, and hoped to see them members of the church of Christ, and useful in setting up his kingdom in the world: and in the absence of this, though they should gain wealth, rank, or fame, he is a disappointed father. He cannot but rejoice and be thankful that his sons are not profligates; but as long as they are not true Christians, his chief joy is not fulfilled. He looks upon their success, their respectability, their worldly comfort, with the inward reflection, "Ah, this is all very well, and I am truly thankful for it, but it reaches no further than the grave; and what I have coveted for them, prayed for, and sought, is 'glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.' I wanted them to be united with me by ties which would last for ever, and make us one in heaven as well as upon earth. Notwithstanding their worldly prosperity, I am, through their want of personal religion, a disappointed father."

This disappointment of parents in regard to their children may be aggravated by several circumstances. Where unusual care has been bestowed upon their education, and it might have been expected that a proportionate degree of excellence would have been the result; where considerable talents have been possessed, and early indications of genius have exhibited themselves so as to awaken expectations; where virtue at one time began to bud, and piety to blossom; where friends congratulated the parents, and the parents felicitated themselves, on the promising appearances of their children; where, in short, for a while all seemed to hold out the most auspicious omens, and to justify

the most favourable conclusions; in such cases, to have all these hopeful beginnings terminate unhappily, and the anticipations raised upon them disappointed; how bitter, how painful, how overwhelmingly cruel! Think of a parent mourning over the wreck of such hopes, and bewailing such a failure.

Young men, let me plead with you on behalf of your parents. Are there not some of you who are thus disappointing every hope which they have formed concerning you? Does not the reflection grieve and shame you, and ought it not to overwhelm you? Let me appeal to your sense of obligation. Ungrateful youths! Have you no idea of what you owe to them? Are these the returns you make them for all their bounty, tenderness, and care, to be a sword in their vitals, and to pierce their very hearts? Did they expect such scenes as these when you hung upon your mother's breast, reposed in her lap, and grasped in childish fear her hand to protect you from danger: when you returned their smiles with your own, and cried with your faint accents of endearment, "My father, my mother?" How can you endure the thought? How without embarrassment can you converse with them, and still daily receive unnumbered favours at their hands, when you are behaving in a manner that looks as if the more they love you, the more they must be afflicted and terrified by you? Do, do have compassion upon them. Or if that will not move you, do have compassion on yourselves; for your own interest is much more nearly concerned than even theirs. It is not yet too late, even though till now you have pursued this course of

disappointing them. There is time to repair the mischief. Repentance and reformation will yet heal the wounds which misconduct has inflicted; and the joy of receiving back the prodigal will almost compensate for the sufferings occasioned by his wanderings and his errors. Say then, and say it at once, "I will arise and go to my father, and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight; forgive, and receive thy once sinning and ungrateful, but now penitent child.'" Such a confession, followed by fruits meet for repentance, will bind up hearts all but irreparably broken, and will transfer you to the class I am next to describe.

II. I speak of the young man fulfilling the hopes of his parents. And it will take very much to do this. Much to reward a mother's pangs in child-birth; her months of anxious care by day, and often sleepless vigilance at night; all which involuntarily prompted her to say, "Surely I shall have a rich reward one day for this." Much to be accounted an adequate reward for a father's incessant toil to provide for his family; his deep concern to select the best school, and the most suitable business for them, and all his wakeful and ceaseless solicitude for the welfare of his sons. How often, when bearing the heat and burden of the day, has he wiped away "the sweat of his brow," and exclaimed, with the smile of hope, "Well, my boy will one day reward me for all this. I am now sowing in hope to reap one day in joy." And there are sons who realise all these expectations. How?

By their dutiful conduct. "There," said a father, "is a son who never gave his father's heart a pang."

I knew the son while he lived, till full of years, and Christian virtues, and public esteem, he no long time since ascended to glory, and left behind him a name never to be repeated but with respect. Other sons of the same family had wrung the father's heart with anguish; but he, by his uniform obedience, general good conduct, and amiable character, was nothing but a delight to his parents. How sweet is it to a parent's heart to see a child so considerate for his comfort as to be ever studious to avoid everything that would for a moment distress him, and to do anything that could yield him the smallest pleasure. A parent does expect, has a right to expect all this; and how ineffably sweet is it to his heart to be able to say, "In all that is dutiful, obedient, reverential, respectful, and attentive, my son is all a son should be or can be. He has equalled all the ideas I had formed in my most sanguine moments of filial excellence. My hopes are more than realised."*

High mental culture and attainments will do much to realise parental hopes. The most affectionate and amiable disposition, coupled with the most dutiful

* A beautiful memoir of that most saintly man and eminent clergyman, the late Mr Bickersteth, has just appeared from the pen of his son-in-law, Mr Birks; and among the other virtues for which that holy servant of Christ was distinguished, filial reverence sustained a very high place. The early history of Mr Bickersteth exhibits one of the most lovely and striking exhibitions of this excellence which I have ever met with. One scarcely wonders at the eminence he attained to as a Christian and a minister, when we read of his conduct as a son. I am persuaded that much of the neglect of the fear of God, for which so many of the young men of the present day are notorious, may be traced to a defect of filial reverence.

conduct, will not answer parental expectation if, at the same time there be a want of application to mental improvement and general knowledge, and also a stolid ignorance or a deplorably low and grovelling taste. In this extraordinary age every man is expected to fill up his place with credit to himself and advantage to others. Society never had stronger claims upon young men than it has now. It is a high satisfaction to a parent blessed with a promising son to be able to say, "There is one who has repaid all the expense incurred by his education. While at school he received the most honourable testimonials for diligence and acquisition. He scarcely ever returned without a prize. He has assiduously improved himself since then, by reading and thinking, and now that he is entering upon life, he is evidently qualified to take a high standing for respectability and usefulness. He will not be one of the multitude who are cyphers. I certainly feel some glow of heartfelt delight, occasionally rising, unless well watched, into pride, as I see how he is acquitting himself already, and is noticed by others; and can predict the eminence to which he will rise, and the esteem with which he will be regarded."

Next come industry, diligence, and aptitude for business; for without these nothing will be sufficient to satisfy parental desire. A son may be dutiful and intelligent, but if he has not devotedness to business, habits of industry, he must occasion disappointment to his parents. Happy is the father who sees in his son the constantly expanding germ of the diligent and thriving tradesman. With what pleasure does he

mark the indefatigable application, the growing skill, the sharpening sagacity, the increasing tact, of his boy, in reference to business! "Ah," says he with gratitude, "I see he will make a good tradesman. He will make his way and, if I am not mistaken, will rise in life; he will be something." The youth rises into the man, and having learned his business or profession, commences it, and displays, as a master, the qualities he learned and exhibited as an apprentice and a shopman. Success crowns his efforts; his business prospers; his father follows him through his successful career with secret delight. He is never afraid to visit his son lest he should find him playing truant from his shop, neglecting his business, with all things in confusion, and ruin looking in at the window. It is always a pleasure to him to go and see the beautiful order, the established system, the well-formed habits, the crowded scene, of a well conducted business. How gratifying to hear from himself the report of his continued success, of his trade extending, his capital accumulating, and his property gradually increasing! The father's solicitude is over; his son is thoroughly established, and has attained a degree of prosperity which at one time could not have been looked for. How peaceful and pleasant are the reflections of the parents of such a son in their private intercourse: "We are happy in being released from the pressing and painful anxieties of some families. Our dear son is obviously doing well. We never had much fear of his success; his steadiness and ability forbade this; but what little anxiety we felt is all gone. Prosperity has begun to dawn upon him, and promises to shine

more and more. We have but one anxiety now, and that is, that he may settle well in marriage." This anxiety is natural and wise. It is God's arrangement and intention that man should marry, for He sees that it is not good for him to be alone. It was not good in Paradise, it is not good now. It is not good for his morals, his comfort, or his prosperity: and all judicious parents have a wise solicitude that their children should in proper time marry, and always marry suitably. Indiscreet and unsuitable marriages by children are a source of unutterable grief to parents. Hence the joy which is felt when others of an opposite nature are contracted. That anxiety, in the case I am supposing, is soon relieved. The prudence and propriety that have characterised the conduct of this good son in other things, do not forsake him in this. He is cautious and wise: selects a woman who, by her sterling excellence, good sense, and amiable qualities is worthy of him. She is one of whom the wise man saith, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." The parents see with delight a prosperous business, a rising family, a happy home.

But still we have not reached the summit of a good man's wishes; for though all this is very pleasant, and to a worldly man would be quite sufficient to realise his uttermost expectations, and fulfil his richest hopes, yet it is not so with the Christian. He has learned that, for himself, religion is the "one thing needful," without which he neither attains to true happiness on earth, nor answers the great end of existence,

nor is meetened for the felicity of heaven; and what he is supremely anxious for on his own account, he desires above all things for his children. He would be unnatural and cruel if he did not. If religion be all important to him, it can be no less so to them. Hence, whatever else they may gain, if they neglect this, he is, as I have already said, and I now repeat it, by way of emphasis, still sad at heart.

But I am now supposing a case in which the Christian parent sees his deepest anxieties relieved, and his fondest hopes realised, in the religious character of his sons. Aware that they are exposed to greater temptations than his daughters, and much more in danger of neglecting religion, he is proportionably thankful when they become decidedly pious. The first symptoms of a serious attention to the momentous concerns of eternity awaken the liveliest emotions of delight, not unmixed with solicitude, lest it should be only as "the morning cloud or early dew, which passeth away." He prays more intensely than ever, and watches more anxiously for decision of character, and shields the bud of hope by his most assiduous care. As the bud expands into the blossom, and the blossom sets in fruit, his hopes and fears alternate, till at length the doubtful case is decided, and his child becomes first a Christian, and then a professor. What a load of parental anxiety is removed! What an accession is made to his parental delight! If the youth has been away from home, and the intelligence of his conversion is conveyed by letter, the good man's heart is too full to hold, and, weeping over the welcome tidings, he hastens to his chamber

to pour out his gratitude to God, the author of this new rich mercy; a mercy in his esteem far greater than the appointment of his son to a lucrative and honourable situation, or his success in some matter of business. And the gratitude of the father is equalled, if not surpassed, by that of the mother. "What, my son a true Christian! My boy, for whom I have suffered so much deep and painful solicitude; who when he left home wrung my heart with agonising fears, because he was going forth as a lamb among wolves; what, he become a sincerely religious man, a child of God! May I indeed believe the blissful intelligence? A happy woman am I now become, to be the mother of one who shall glorify God, and enjoy him for ever."

The religion of this young man proves itself sincere, consistent, and active. It preserves him from the snares to which a youth away from home is ever exposed, and affords another illustration of the declaration that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." He connects himself with the schemes of usefulness which are so numerous in this day of christian activity, and becomes a blessing to the church and the world. His religion goes with him into his future character, situation, and circumstances, as a husband, a father, a master, and a tradesman. He is seen habitually among the christian philanthropists of the age, uniting his influence and energies with theirs, to bless his species, and glorify his God. His assistance is willingly granted to all that is going on for the moral reformation of the

world. By his prayers, his example, his property, his intelligence, and his labours, he acts up to the metaphorical description of the righteous, where our Lord says to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world; ye are the salt of the earth." His family are brought up in the fear of the Lord, and are likely to be his imitators in all good things, and thus hand forward religion as a heir-loom to their descendants.

What a beautiful scene is this for christian parents to witness, if, indeed, they are still alive to watch the growing piety, prosperity, happiness, and usefulness of this their son! How blissful are the feelings, how delightful the intercourse of the happy couple as they sit and talk of their beloved and holy child! If he live at home with them, how uninterruptedly agreeable is their intercourse with him! They have nothing to complain of or to reprove; and he nothing to explain, defend, or excuse. They have common objects, common delights, and common topics. Their spiritual tastes, their highest and most momentous pursuits and pleasures are alike. How it rejoices them to be the witnesses of his piety and activity, and to hear the testimonies of others to his respectability, importance, and usefulness? How many congratulations they receive on the character and conduct of this their son! They see old age coming on upon them, but here is the bright star in the evening sky of their life. Here is no disappointment, but on the other hand, the fulfilment of their brightest hopes. Here is the rich reward of all their parental labours and anxieties, the abundant answer of all their prayers.

It may be that the parents are called to descend

first to the tomb, according to the order of nature. During a long decay, they are cheered and comforted, if their son live at home, with his presence, his prayers, and his conversation. If he live away from home, they are refreshed by his letters, and by his occasional visits. His conduct has planted no thorns in their dying pillow, but has softened it till it has rendered it even downy. They feel that separation from such a child is indeed bitter and painful to nature: but then his piety assures them they are not parting for ever. As he comforts them by his holy suggestions and devout petitions, they are ofttimes in a strait, like the apostle, desiring to depart, to be with Christ, and yet on the other hand desiring, for the sake of those they are leaving, to remain. No painful but necessary warnings issue from their lips, wringing their hearts with anguish, as they solemnly abjure an ungodly son to forsake his ways. No bitter tears roll down their cheeks as they grasp his hand and entreat him to repent, and thus mitigate the sorrows of death, the only sorrow they know. On the contrary, they utter only words of consolation, expressions of gratitude, and effusions of joy, that they shall soon meet again. They are ready to repeat the words of Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, not only upon myself, but upon my children also." Happy parents, and happy son!

But if, on the other hand, this son after his father's own heart, should by an inversion of the order of nature, be called first to descend to the grave, with what feelings do his pious parents hang over his couch

of sickness, and watch the progress of decay and the advance of death; how different from those of parents who have to wait around the death-bed of an ungodly son! True they are disappointed by his early removal from our world. To see such a blossom, yea fruit, of parental hope cut off and sent to the grave, is indeed a trial! One so dutiful, so good, so holy, so promising, so useful, to be carried off from them, from the church, from the world; how mysterious an event, how great a calamity! Yes, but then his deep submission, his strong faith, his joy unspeakable and peace that passes understanding, his holy converse, his words of consolation to them, how tranquillising are all these! No agonising fears about his spiritual state distress their minds. All is safe for eternity. He dies, but they can trace him to the realms of glory. To lose such a son is of course a severe trial of their faith and patience; but the recollections of his past character and conduct, the soothing influence of his dying testimony, the assurance of his heavenly bliss, the anticipations of their final meeting and everlasting association, reconcile them to the stroke, and enable them to feel that after all this their disappointment is inconceivably lighter than that of many who are afflicted by the conduct of a living profligate. In one case the affliction brings its own comfort with it, but in the other it is unmixed wormwood and gall. To the language of condolence which they receive from sympathising friends, they are ready to give the answer which the Duke of Ormond did in similar circumstances, "I would rather have my dead son than half the living sons in all Christendom."

There have been cases where the realisation of parental hopes has come after a season of protracted, anxious, and even agonizing fear and disappointment. The exquisitely beautiful parable of the prodigal son, in its close as well as in its beginning, has, in a few instances, and perhaps but a few, received its accomplishment in the children of the godly. There have been youths whose erratic career of folly and sin has half broken a father's and a mother's heart, but whose ultimate recovery came just in time to save them from being entirely crushed. I heard of one young man of this description who, though the son of religious parents, and therefore the child of many prayers and much instruction, had wandered far, and wide, and long, from the path of piety and morality. Through his dark and winding course he was followed by a father's prayers and a mother's tears. Every means which ingenuity could suggest, had been tried to reclaim him, but in vain. To parental remonstrance while under his father's roof he was deaf, and to all letters sent to him in his distant vagrancies he was insensible. As a last means of restoring him, after a long suspension of intercourse, his father, who could not forget his truant and wicked son, nor alienate his heart altogether from him, called together in the vestry of the chapel, where, if I mistake not, he laboured as a minister, a few friends to pray for his penitence and restoration. After several had poured out their hearts in fervent supplication, the father gave utterance to his own feelings, in a strain of most tender supplications, which melted all present to tears. During these exercises a poor wretched creature was

seen wandering round the window, and listening at the door of the vestry; and no sooner had the prayer of the good man for his son ended, after which the meeting was about to break up, than the listener, who was indeed the subject of all these prayers, entered, fell upon the neck of his father and simply sobbed out, "Oh, my father, forgive me." It is unnecessary I should describe the scene that followed; you have it in the parable of the prodigal son, "Rejoice with me, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." He lived a new life, and realized in the end, the hopes of his parents, after long disappointing them. What an encouragement this to parents to continue instant in prayer! And what an encouragement to prodigals to say, "I will arise and go unto my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." If any whose eye shall glance over these pages shall be still in the land of their wandering, to them would I say, Return, return. It is not yet too late. You may still realize the hopes of your parents. You may still repent, reform, and lead a new life. The grace of God which brings salvation may teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this evil world. You may be respectable, happy, and useful even yet. Abandon despair. There is no need of it even in your case. If returning prodigals are few, be you one of the few. Let me recommend, earnestly recommend, you to read the fifteenth chapter of the gospel by Luke, which is one of the most beautiful and touching portions of the whole Bible. It is

full of instruction, of tenderness, of encouragement; and will, if you have not extinguished every spark of feeling in your soul, melt your heart to compunction and your eyes to tears. It describes your character, suits your condition, represents your father's heart towards you, and will perhaps, by God's grace, recover you from your present condition. Read it, read it, till this blessed effect is produced. Read it with earnest prayer, that you may be indeed a reclaimed, restored prodigal, and even yet bind up the heart which you have nearly broken, and not bring down a "father's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave." Or if your parents have gone to the world where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," and perhaps have been hurried to their grave by your misconduct; if they left our earth with hearts broken by disappointed hopes, and breathed out their last feelings for you, exclaiming "O my son, my son, must we part for ever?" if in this world there was not, from your good conduct, any reward of their prayers, their tears, their example, and their labours, carry it to them, by your present repentance and reformation, and by your following them to heaven when you die. If nothing but disappointment was felt by them here, let the reward of their trouble be granted to them there. Though they left you in your sinful wanderings when they ascended to their glory, and feared they had lost you for ever, let them through your forsaking your evil courses find you in Paradise. What a meeting will you then have in that happy state! How will it enhance even their heavenly felicity, after having given up all hope of your salvation upon earth, to have the assurance of your salvation by seeing you in heaven!

Richly will it repay them for all their sorrows and anxiety, and infinitely more than compensate for all they have endured on your account.

And now, young men, let me close this chapter by a few more words of affectionate yet earnest expostulation and persuasion. It is cruel under any circumstances, to frustrate wilfully and wantonly, by any part of our conduct, the hopes of our fellow-creatures; and the cruelty is in exact proportion to the strength, the propriety, and justness of the expectations which are so defeated. If persons who have no right to expect anything from us make us out of mere choice the subject of foolish and unwarranted anticipations, we have no great need to concern ourselves about the matter; and any disappointment which we may occasion is rather a punishment for their folly than a reproach upon us. But where by a kind of necessity we become to others the objects of their well-founded and rational expectations; where these expectations are very large and authorised by every consideration; where their disappointment must be followed by great misery; and the accomplishment of their wishes must secure them great happiness; and where it is in our power to bring about either of these alternatives, it is most cruel wantonly to sport with the hopes thus suspended upon our conduct. A generous and sensitive mind does not like to occasion disappointment even to a dumb animal. Think, then, of the hopes of parents in reference to their children. I appeal to your generosity on their behalf. Have they not a right to entertain hope concerning you? Does not their very relationship give them this right? Fancy your mother thus addressing you, "I am a mother, and

have all a mother's affections, anxieties, hopes, and rights. Next to God and my husband, in whom should I hope so justly as in my child, whom I have borne in my womb, nursed at my breast, fondled in my arms? For whom have I given the sleep of countless nights, and the labour of countless days. Whom I have taught to walk, to speak, to think, to act. Whom I have loved with a mother's love, watched around his couch in sickness, wept when he wept, and smiled when he smiled, heard his complaints, and soothed his sorrows, borne with his waywardness, and gently reproved his faults. Whom as an infant, a child, a youth, a man, I have anxiously cared for, as I have watched with solicitude each successive development. Whom I have prayed for, instructed, warned, encouraged. O, my son, my son, had not thy mother a right to hope that all this would be rewarded at some period when it should be all understood? I saw thy infant smiles as thou turnedst thy eyes upon her that fed thee from her bosom, and which seemed at that time silently to thank me for thy sustenance. I heard thee call me thy 'dear mother,' as thou madest thy first essays at articulate language. I beheld thy opening talents and virtues, as they appeared to be then, and interpreted them into signs of future excellence, and had I not a right to hope for much at thy hands, and wilt thou disappoint it all, and thus reward thy mother's care? Shall hopes so early awakened, so fondly cherished, so long sustained, so justly founded, that rose so high, and anticipated so much, be all doomed, by thy misconduct, to disappointment? O, my son, my son." And then your father too, think of him; that kind, good man, who when he first took you in his arms

felt the new and strange emotions of that rapturous moment all kindle into hope, as he looked upon your face, and for the first time cried, "My child!" How did that hope grow with your growth, and strengthen with your strength: rising higher and sinking deeper at every advanced stage of your life. His hope of your future excellence was his prospective reward for all the labour he sustained to support, to educate, and provide for you. Often, as he wiped away the sweat of his brow amidst the heat and burden of the day, and began to think his labours almost too severe, his hope of your future good conduct checked the rising feeling of hardship, and compelled him to say, "It is for my children; and it is my hope that they, by their affection and general good conduct, will one day make me as thankful that I endure all this for them, as their mother already does."

Young men, have you generosity, gratitude, nobility of soul? If so, let me ask you, what do such ties, such benefits, such feelings, and such conduct, deserve at your hands? Can you be insensible to such an appeal? One should imagine it would be your study and delight to acknowledge and discharge, in the most effectual and satisfactory manner, obligations which you began to contract before you had the ability to understand and appreciate them; and which, from that time to the present, have never ceased to accumulate. Above all beings upon earth your parents have the largest claim upon your consideration, and though there are higher motives to the cultivation of all moral excellence, than even a regard to their happiness, yet this ought never to be left out of view, and never will be, by any generous, dutiful, and affectionate son.

CHAPTER XI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESENT AGE.

The Children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of times, to know what Israel ought to do. 1 CHRONICLES xii, 32.

Can ye not discern the signs of the times? MATT. xvi, 3.

IN the first of these passages the Israelites who were of the tribe of Issachar, in the time of David, received a high encomium for understanding the times, and knowing what it became the inhabitants of the kingdom to do. They were thoughtful, intelligent men, who studied and who understood the signs of the times; were well versed in public affairs; knew the character of the age that was passing over them, and what was best to be done for the exigencies of their nation; and perceived that it was the duty and the interest of Israel to advance David to the throne. In the second passage our Lord reproves the Pharisees for their not being able to discern the signs of their times. The signs of the times are the character and aspect of the passing age. Every age has its characteristic signs impressed upon it by the hand of God. To discern them is to mark and comprehend them. Such attention and discrimination are our duty, and the neglect of it subjects us to the rebuke of Christ.

Among many extremes to be avoided, there are two which are suggested by the subject of the present discourse; I mean too great individuality of feeling on the one hand, and being too much the citizen or the cosmopolite on the other, or put in other words, too selfish a regard for our own personal affairs, or too absorbing an interest in the affairs of the state or the world. There are some persons, though they are not many, whose whole world is self. They have surrounded themselves by a very narrow boundary, within which they endeavour to keep their attention closed, and occupy themselves strictly in their own business, with as little inquisitiveness about, or connection or sympathy with, the great world without as possible. Now this is wrong, for as they are members of the community, they owe it some duties, which they cannot rightly discharge without knowing its condition. It is foolish, because their individual lot is influenced by the general one. It betrays a gross insensibility not to look up when Providence is passing by, and notice its stately march. It prevents their getting good, as well as doing good, for God is ever teaching us lessons by public events. It is very true there may be the opposite extreme, of being so occupied by watching the progressive development of the great drama of Providence, as to forget and neglect our own individual concerns, and our immediate duties. We are placed in a busy world, full of men and their works, of transactions and events, and of many varieties of human characters and actions. We may be acquainted with all that is going on by reading, conversation, and observation. We are in the midst

of the throng, and are moving on with it. It is of vast importance then to attend to two things; first, not to let our attention be too much drawn off from our own private matters to public ones; and secondly, to take care that our notice of public events be carried on wisely, so as to turn what we observe to profitable account. Our Lord's reproof to the Jews contained in the text condemns the habitual disregard of passing events in all ages of the world and in all periods of its history. But there are times when it is peculiarly to be reprobated. Providence is always at work, and we, after all, are poor judges of the comparative importance of its operations, since preparations may be going on in its secret recesses, of which the stupendous dispensations that we witness are but the first manifestation. Still there can be no doubt of the wonderful character of our age, nor any danger of our unduly magnifying its importance. It is obvious that the world is becoming a far more active, agitating, changing, tumultuous scene, than formerly. Discoveries and inventions, intelligence and events, omens and alarms, come upon us not singly but in troops; not in showers and streams, but with the rapidity, the copiousness, and the force of an inundation. In such an age, to be swallowed up in our own individual concerns, and to be such religious recluses, literary solitaires, mercantile devotees, or domestic exclusives, as to have no sympathy with the actors and operations of the age, is sanctioned by neither religion or reason, but is contrary to both.

I. Let us enquire into the characteristics of the age in which we live. Almost every age has something in

common with other ages, and something peculiar to itself. What then are those peculiarities of the present times which should be pointed out to the enquiring and observant mind? If we speak of the age as regards its intellectual character, we cannot fail to notice an intense excitement and inquisitiveness. The human mind was never so active and so exploring in all the regions of thought as now. The discoveries of science are wonderful and, as might be expected, the inventions of art bear proportion to them. The two must ever move together, being reciprocally helpful to each other. What surprising disclosures of the secrets of nature are going on under the scrutinising researches of experimental philosophy! Men seem to feel as if there were no limits to human inquiry, and as if there was nothing knowable which they could not and would not know; as if nothing would satisfy them till they had reached the furthest boundary of knowledge. How rapidly and how widely is the circle of universal knowledge expanding. We are grown so familiar with the wonders which have been of late years achieved by the human intellect, that we now do not think anything too wonderful for man to attempt or expect. Hence the magnificent, but somewhat presumptuous, title given by Humboldt to his last publication, "Cosmos," "The World;" as if he had laid open all the globe to our knowledge, and not only our planet, but the great universe itself, with all it comprehends.

If we regard the age in its social aspect, we see the same proof of its extraordinary character. "The pervading connecting principle of community throughout mankind as one immense body, has become much more

alive. It is now much more verified to be one body, however extended, by the quicker, stronger sensations which pervade the rest of it, from what effects any particular part." Intercourse is so facilitated, quickened, and extended, that men begin to feel less and less the interposing geographical and political barriers, which separate them from each other, and are approximating to universal neighbourhood; great social principles are also in operation, which are breaking down national prejudicies and antipathies. The evils of war are more and more denounced in loud and emphatic terms, and schemes of universal brotherhood are put forth, which, if not likely to be immediately successful, are the harbingers of the approaching reign of love, and the shadows which coming events cast before them. The subject of slavery, the treatment of criminals, the foundation of government, the theory and practice of law, the physical condition of the people, the temperance reform, national education, the principles of international trade, the grand questions of civil and religious liberty, are all agitated and discussed with an inquisitiveness and an eagerness which look as if society were absolutely and resolutely bent on self-improvement, and was going on towards a point immeasurably in advance of anything it has yet reached. Nor should we forget the extraordinary impetus that has been lately given to colonization and emigration, by which new additions are being made to the great family of nations, and new experiments instituted in the principles of human government.

The political character of the age, especially if we take in the whole of the present century, is almost un-

parallelled for the number, rapidity, extent, and magnitude of its revolutions. In what a state has Europe existed during this period! Almost every kingdom but our own has been the seat of war, and most of them the scenes of changes of dynasty and government. We have seen monarchs driven from their thrones; sceptres broken, and crowns rolling in the dust. And though the great earthquake has ceased at present (1851) and there is a lull in the tempests that have been raging; yet with four millions of men under arms at this moment, and nations jealously watching each other, with France uneasy and restless within itself, and containing the elements of mischief fermenting both in its capital and in its provinces, who can say how soon the spark will fall which may cause another explosion? Depend upon it, the next convulsion, come when it may, will be more tremendous than any that have preceded it. The liberties of Europe have yet to be established by the subversion of many of its old governments, who seem not disposed to gain wisdom by experience. The nations are panting for freedom, and the despots are resolved they shall not be free; and ere long the slaves will break their fetters and the sceptres of their tyrants, in the same furious struggle and in the same awful hour. Young men, you know not and cannot conceive what you may be called to witness. Happily you live in a country where whatever the many have to gain from the few, it will be won by reason and not by force.

The moral aspect of this age is no less impressive than either of the preceding. If asked to describe in one or two words this aspect of the age, I should say,

first of all, it is the age of conflict. The struggle always going on in our world between truth and error, good and evil, has assumed a character of earnestness, not to say fierceness, as if both parties were preparing for a last and decisive battle. The four great religious controversies are becoming more and more determined. There is the conflict which is maintained by infidelity in all its forms, (including atheism, pantheism, and deism) against Christianity: that which is carried on between those foundation truths which (as held by all the chief denominations of Christendom) may fairly be called orthodoxy and heresy: that which is sustained by the advocates and opponents of State establishments of religion; and that mighty struggle which is becoming more determined every day between Popery and Protestantism. Never was the war of opinions so general and so determined as it is now. To a contemplative mind it is a somewhat awful exercise of thought, to look over this vast field of conflict, where such forces are contending for supremacy over the moral destinies of the present and all future generations of mankind, and to watch the movements of the armies, and their alternate victories and defeats.

Happily there is also another feature of the age, which, though in one sense it bears the aspect of conflict also, is sufficiently distinct from it to admit of separate consideration; I mean the evangelising spirit, now manifested by professing Christians of all denominations. This though it may be unpraised, and even to a considerable extent unnoticed, by "the children of this world," wise as they are in their generation, is the grandest and most hopeful sign of the times. If then

asked for a second characteristic of the moral aspect of the times, I reply without a moment's hesitation, benevolence. Yes, and that not a mere sentimental compassion, the benevolence that can weep before the pictures of imagination, but will do nothing to relieve the miseries of real life. Nor is it the benevolence that only builds alms-houses, hospitals, dispensaries; which would combat the ills that flesh is heir to, disease, poverty, and hunger, though I do not think lightly of this, nor is the age wanting in it; but the benevolence which characterises this age, and in which I most delight, is that which lighted upon our orb from heaven in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to redeem man from sin, and death, and hell. That which lived, moved and had its being in the apostles, when they went everywhere preaching the gospel, "to turn men from dumb idols to serve the living and true God." That which in modern times is embodied in the character of the devoted and self-sacrificing missionary, who, for the love of Christ and pity for immortal souls, quits the comforts of civilised society to dwell among savages amidst the deserts of Africa or the ice of polar regions. That, in short, which aims at the salvation of souls, the rescue of the human mind from the chains of ignorance and the emancipation of the heart from the bondage of its lusts. This, this is the noblest characteristic of our age, a religious zeal to diffuse the blessings of the gospel over the face of the whole earth, more intense, more active, and more comprehensive than any which has existed since the apostles' days. The missionary spirit, as manifested in the various organisations which it has

called into existence, the numerous missions which it has established, and the triumphs over barbarism, idolatry, vice, and cruelty which it has achieved, stamps upon this age its most beneficent, most important, and most sublime character. Christianity is the world's best friend. Apart from its being the means of eternal life in another world, it is the best benefactor of man in all his relations to the present world. "It maintains an incessant struggle against all that is selfish, barbarous, and inimical to human happiness, and comprehends in itself the seeds of endless improvement; and it is this which rising upon us like a finer sun, has quickened moral vegetation, and replenished our country with talents, virtues, and exploits, which, in spite of its physical disadvantages, have rendered it a paradise, the delight and wonder of the world." How great, then, and how noble an enterprise is that which attempts to make this the religion of the world, and thus to supplant all the vices and crimes which degrade the intellect, pollute the heart, deform the character, and fill the life with misery!

Such, then, Young Men, is the age in which you are called to exist; and such the signs, omens and portents by which it is distinguished: and to them may be added the reflection, which gives the consideration its most intense force and importance, that your lot is cast in the country which is placed by Providence at the centre of the intellectual, social, and moral interests of the world. It is something more than an effusion of national vanity, to affirm that England, beyond all countries on the globe, is at present the temple of religion, the hall of science, the school of learning, the

citadel of liberty, the refuge of distress, the mart of commerce, and the seat of power. On her more closely than on any other nation, depend the intellectual, social, and moral destinies of the world. The nations of the earth and all coming ages and generations have more to hope from her than from any other country under the sun. Her decadence would be more their loss, as her continued glory and greatness would be more their gain, than the adversity or prosperity of any other state on the face of the globe. It is not then allotted to you to look on from afar upon passing events, without being permitted to guide or influence them. You are in the midst of them, and can touch the springs of activity which are in motion around you. You are not only permitted, but invited, and not only invited, but commanded, to bear a part in all that is going forward for the world's improvement.

II. I therefore consider the character of the men that are wanted for the age. This will lead me to state what you should be. Men of the age, and for it. Men worthy of it, that can avail themselves of its opportunities for getting good and doing good; that catch its spirit, and receive its impress; that can even do something to improve it, as well as be improved by it; that are wiser, holier, more benevolent, more active, than their fathers; that, like those of the tribe of Issachar, "understand the times, and know what Israel ought to do."

As the basis of everything else, of all the talents and the virtues by which you can act most beneficially, I mention of course personal religion. Maintaining as I do that real religion is the chief element in the world's

well-being, as well as in the happiness of each individual, I ought to mention it as the first thing essentially necessary in a man who would benefit the age in which he lives. I have as high an estimate as any one of the value and importance of the sciences, literature and the arts; I am as strenuous an advocate of liberty as can be found; but I contend that they will never renew the human heart, or restore peace to it. It is religion more than these things, or than all other things, that the nations need for their repose and felicity; and he that would do most to bless his species must seek to spread the blessings of Christianity. When I speak of religion being the world's best friend, I mean religion as we have it pure in the Bible, and in the hearts and lives of its true believers; and not as it is presented in the corrupt forms which it has assumed in the creeds, churches, constitutions, and professions of some that call themselves Christians; I mean the religion of repentance, truth, holiness, and love; the subjugation of the heart and life to the law of God; "the wisdom that is first pure, then peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits, gentle and easy to be entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." I see with pleasure the ever advancing tide of knowledge: but I am quite sure it is not upon this, but upon the stream of religion, that men must float into the haven of sound morals and permanent peace. The best benefactor of his race is not he who teaches them something they did not before know, though even he is entitled to their gratitude, but he who delivers them from the dominion of their passions, and the slavery of their vices. Hence no man can serve his age so effectually

as he who fears God and, under the influence of motives derived thence, seeks to benefit his fellow creatures by implanting in their hearts the principles that sway his own. The worshippers of knowledge award to the philosopher the palm which is due to the Christian philanthropist, as the world's best friend. Hence, my young friends, I tell you that you are not men for the age if you are not religious men. Neglect religion, and you may by your vices become the world's bane and curse. Possess it, and you not only promote the moral interests of the age, which are its highest ones, but you also give the best guarantee, and use the best means too, of serving it in every other way.

It becomes you to be observant, thoughtful, reflective: for who in such an age as this can be in harmony with the times without such a disposition? Rise above the folly of those young men whose frivolous spirits, taken up with the levities, trifles and petty impertinencies of little minds, seem incapable of serious reflection; men who would wonder what strange mysterious power was operating upon them, if at any time they found themselves in a pensive mood, and, in ever so slight a manner, moralising on passing events: men who seem to think they are born to talk, and smoke, and laugh, rather than to think. Despise such men. From these gay and thoughtless triflers society has nothing to expect. They may have their brief day of sunshine and pleasure: they will then die, vanish, and be forgotten, as though they had never been. Belong, my young friends, to the class so characteristically described as "thoughtful men;" men who,

knowing they were made for thought and reflection, fix their eyes on the currents of events, to see which way they were flowing; who not only make themselves acquainted with the surface of things, but also look beneath it, and endeavour philosophically to trace events backward to their causes, and forward to their consequences; who exercise not only their curiosity in knowing what is taking place, but their reason in judging of its tendencies and influences; who read the histories of past times, as well as the chronicles of the present age, to form opinions founded upon examination, comparison, and legitimate deduction. Endeavour to discern the connection of events, and their influence upon the great interests of social happiness, liberty and religion. And especially let the speculative contemplation of human life and passing events be combined in you with active energy. Let observation constantly be converted into reflection, and reflection into action. Let your thoughtfulness be something more than musing. Be not like one who watches the swelling tide in a dreamy mood, and sees it rise and fall as a mere object of curiosity; but be as one who is waiting for it to reach a certain elevation, when he shall throw in a net or embark in a boat. Stand amidst passing events, asking the questions, "What does all this mean generally, and what does it require me to do? What practical teaching is there in all this? What must I rise from this scene to perform for myself, for society, or for the church of God? What is it that Providence, by what is now passing before me, calls on me to attempt?" I do not by all this mean to impose upon you a premature gravity, an unnatural solemnity and

taciturnity. I do not mean to depress the buoyancy and check the sprightliness of youth, to stiffen your manners into repulsive formality, and to transform a modest humble youth into a "Sir Oracle." Nothing of the sort, but still I entreat young men to be sober-minded.

Here again I bring in mental cultivation and robustness of intellect, as of great importance. Throughout the whole of this work I have insisted much on them, being well-assured that though as an object of human pursuit, religion is the first thing, it is not every thing; and that other things being equal, he is likely to be the most useful and happy man, who is best taught and best disciplined. I say to you most emphatically, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" but then I add, Seek next a well-informed, well-cultivated mind. In an age like the present, so cultivated, so enlightened, no man can make way in the world, so as to gain respect, influence others, and do good, who has not some power of character, and some store of intellectual wealth. Character does something, I know, even where the jewel is not set in the gold of brilliant knowledge: but how much more when it is so! He who is ambitious to be useful, and it is a noble ambition wherever it exists, and ought to exist in all, must not neglect to improve his mind. Who in such an age as this will hearken to the talk of ignorance, or bow to the puerilities of weakness, or revere even real excellence if it be associated with imbecility? One of the characteristics of the age is, as I have considered, active benevolence; and another the diffusion of knowledge.

Many have taken part in the former, without being careful to take part in the latter, and thus have failed in doing all the good they wished.

I recommend the adoption of certain great principles, which ought ever to be present with you when looking abroad upon the course of events and the general history of mankind; and which every one who properly discerns the signs of the times will assiduously cherish.

Recognise in the current of human affairs the scheme and operations of an all-wise, all-controlling Providence. Behold in all events the permission or the appointment of God. Renounce not only the atheist's creed, but his mode of thinking and speaking of passing events. The transactions and affairs of the day, though brought to pass by a vast multitude of free and accountable agents, fulfil God's counsel, and contribute to the perfecting of his plans. Be the signs of the times therefore what they may, they are such as he has stamped upon them, and are significant of something pertaining to him and his purpose. Believe that the will of God controls all events. In looking over the scenes of history, as well as those of nature, realise the thought that all you see is governed by one controlling will, one infinitely wise and benevolent mind. This gives additional interest and grandeur to the view. There is no beauty, no interest, no pleasure, in the idea of chance. It is not only an irreligious and unphilosophical, but it is also an unpoetical thing, a repulsive negation, a sterile, hideous conception. On the contrary, how delightful it is to look upon the revolutions of empire, the discoveries of

science, the inventions of art, the conflict of systems, the progress of society, and realize in all these the operations of an Ever-present, Omniscient Intellect; and thus to feel ourselves in the great workshop or laboratory of the all-wise, all-good, all-powerful Artificer, and surrounded with the glorious, though as yet unfinished productions of His consummate skill!

Another great principle to direct us in considering the events of the age, is that truth is far more excellent and important in matters of morality and conscience, than in matters of science or mere intellect; or in other words, that religion and virtue are superior to science, literature, and the arts, as to all that affects the well being of man. All truth is important; but all truth is not equally important. Man's moral is above his intellectual nature. The intellectual is for the moral, rather than the moral for the intellectual; and as the intellectnal is for the moral, so the moral is for the eternal. I have glanced at this, in a former chapter; and renew the consideration of it here on account of its importance. It is, as I have already said, as a moral agent that man is furthest removed from the brutes that perish, and approximates nearest to God. The lower animals have moments of reason, but they have no susceptibility of moral ideas. Piety and virtue are loftier qualities of character in themselves, and far more productive of happiness, than merely intellectual acquisitions; they alone fit the soul for communion with God now, and for presence with him hereafter in heaven. The extension of knowledge alone, without religion and morals, even if every barbarian in existence were made a philosopher,

would fail to make men happy; but moral qualities will make men happy in any state of society, in any condition of life. The Greenlander amidst the never-melting ices and long nights of Arctic regions, the Red Indian amidst his boundless prairies and interminable forests, the Hottentot amidst the vast African deserts, or the Negro subjected to the yoke of slavery, may, by the external blessings of the gospel, and the internal graces of a holy mind, be happy. One would imagine, from much that is said and done in the present age, that knowledge was the bread of life which would satisfy every desire of the soul hungering after bliss, the panacea which would heal every wound of diseased humanity, the crown of glory to our nature, the chief felicity of our present existence, and all we need for our happiness in another world. This is however a lamentable and fatal error, but one in which nearly the whole civilised world is involved. Education, apart from religion is, it seems, to do everything for man. Ideas, ideas, ideas, are alone needed to renew, reform, and bless the human race. Let but mankind be admitted to the tree of knowledge, and they will find nothing but good to be the result. It is the darkness of the intellect only, that is the cause of the depravity of the heart; and only let in the light of science, and it will set all right. Such is the deplorable error of the moral quacks of the age, whose nostrum for the cure of all diseases is knowledge. Deluded men! They would rectify society without religion, and govern it without God. Have they forgotten all history, especially that of Greece and Rome? Have they ever read what the apostle

says, "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It is something for the moral nature that man needs for his happiness; and you may offer mere intellectual knowledge to a man whose limbs are dislocated, or whose flesh is corroded by disease, as that which will give him health and enjoyment, as reasonably as you can offer it to the unholy man, as that which will give him holiness, ease, and contentment. While then you concede to knowledge all that is contended for on its behalf, short of its being the supreme good, and while you go on seeking it for yourself, and diffusing it among others, ever remember that religious and moral truth is infinitely more important than science and the arts; and give your most zealous support to those institutions which promote it. You see on every hand restlessness and dissatisfaction. Amidst the advances of society in all that can exalt and dignify man as an intellectual being, amidst all the wonders which his noble intellect is producing, amidst all the homage he is ever receiving from his fellows and from himself, he is still as far from happiness as ever, and still lifting up the anxious inquiry, "Who will show us any good?" The nations of the earth, notwithstanding their marvellous advancement in physical knowledge and refinement, are still as ignorant of the nature, and as short of the attainment, of true bliss as ever. Yes, and they ever must be so, as long as any truth is set above that which is divinely revealed in the word of God, and as long as the seat of happiness is supposed to be the intellect rather

than the heart. Young men, be it your felicity to discover what it is that man needs to make him happy, and then to join those who are labouring to diffuse "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," which by renovating the moral nature, roots out all that can degrade and disturb it, and plants all those seeds of piety and virtue which can elevate, adorn, and bless it.

As another principle to guide you in your views, conduct, and relations in this important age, let it be your conviction that all social changes are subservient to the kingdom of Christ. In all difficult problems, and complicated schemes, it is a vast advantage to be furnished with a key to unlock the whole. Now this advantage we possess in the knowledge furnished by the Bible, concerning not only the tendency, but the actual design and final result, of all events, to promote the advancement of Christianity on the earth. It is not at all necessary to prove to those for whom I am writing that the universal diffusion of the Christian religion in its purity, would be a great blessing to the human race. What curses are Paganism, Mohammedanism, and Popery! What a withering blight has come from those sources over the moral interests of the globe! What a jubilee for the world would the universal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ be! How many evils would flee before Him: war, slavery, tyranny, anarchy, and vice in all its branches! How many blessings would follow in his train; peace, liberty, good government, just laws, universal brotherhood! The diffusion of Christianity is the greatest thing that can happen in and to our world. Nothing can for a moment be put in comparison with it:

nothing can be conceived more worthy of the Divine Being, as the supreme end of his government. Hence it is very delightful to know that all that is taking place is subservient to this end. How grand is the position of a true Christian, a believer in revelation! He stands upon the mount of prophecy, and sees all the various operations of science, literature, art, history, commerce, navigation, all widening the channel and deepening the bed of the "River of Life," which is flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, for the salvation of the world. He sees statesmen, warriors, travellers, philosophers, merchants, mechanicians, engineers, while pursuing their own separate objects, and never dreaming of promoting Christianity, actually carrying on this great work. Is it not an immense advantage, in looking abroad upon the millions of events of all kinds that are ever occurring, events which seem to have no connection with each other, and no end and design in common, to be furnished with the knowledge of the centre in which all these lines meet and converge? We are told that Christ is Head over all things to his church. There is the secret, the grand glorious and blissful secret. In looking upon the progress of science and the arts, the question is often almost involuntarily asked, "Where will it all end? What will it all come to?" The Bible answers the question: In the setting up in our world of Christ's kingdom of truth, holiness, and happiness. Take this conviction with you through life. Look abroad upon this wonderful age, with the knowledge of this still more wonderful and glorious fact; and while the unreflecting, irreligious, sceptical,

or atheistic philosopher is revelling in the discoveries of science, but stopping there, do you go on to that nobler cause, the universal diffusion of religion, of which all the sciences are the hand-maids, and he himself, though he knows it not, nor does his heart think so, is but an unconscious instrument.

The last principle I would request you to take up and apply to the age is this, Social reform must be brought about by individual regeneration. This principle is as important as it is true. We have a great deal in various directions about the improvement of society, and a noble idea it is, whether politically or morally viewed. Social evils are so numerous, so deeply seated, and so pernicious, that it is desirable and important that they should be removed by extensive reform. But it is forgotten, even by those who declaim most loudly against them, and call most earnestly for a better direction to be given to the masses, that the best and only way to improve the whole, is by seeking the improvement of each part. Individual regeneration is the only method of general reformation. It is all well enough to talk about the latter, and to join in combined efforts to promote it; but it will end in talk, as long as there is no concern for each man to improve himself. Public and confederate evil must, I know, be publicly and jointly attacked; but the assailants must begin with reforming themselves, and come to the assault on others with clean hands and pure hearts. It is of vast importance to set out in life with this view of things. He is the best reformer who begins with the reformation of himself; and no systems will be effectual for public

amelioration which leave out of consideration the necessity of individual excellence. A deep sense of personal responsibility should lie on every man's conscience. Every man is a part of the existing generation, and does something by his own character and conduct to form the character of the age. Each ought therefore to resolve, What I would have the age to be, that I will endeavour to be.

No man can rightly appreciate his age who does not cherish Public Spirit. This, at all times incumbent, is especially so in the present day. By this I do not mean a noisy obstructive and restless desire to obtain notoriety by a seeming zeal to rectify public evils, and to promote the public good, a disposition to associate with those who are given to change; but a determination, founded upon conscientious conviction, associated with deep humility and modestly expressed, to do all the good you can, and to leave the world the better for your having lived in it. No man "liveth to himself" is the dictate of reason, as well as the command of revelation. Each man, not being like Alexander Selkirk, the solitary inhabitant of a desolate island, is, as a member of society, a debtor to the community from which he receives benefits, and is under corresponding obligations to it. Every man can do something to benefit other men, and what he can do he ought to do. If this is his duty at all times, it is especially so at the present time. Benevolence, as I have already shown, is one of the noblest and most identifying moral features of the age. Never was so much doing for the well-being of mankind. It is a glorious thing, and makes one grateful for the

present, and hopeful for the future. Men are everywhere stepping out of the centre of selfishness towards the broad circumference of the general good. It is an age of action, of action in the cause of God and human happiness. Public Spirit has become with multitudes a principle, and with multitudes more a fashion. Selfishness acquires at such a time peculiar enormity, whether it be the selfishness of avarice, which will give no money for the public good; of indolence, which will give no labour; or of literary or scientific taste, which will give no time. Under the influence of public spirit, the world is improving; ignorance, vice, and misery are yielding to its influence; and knowledge, truth, holiness, and happiness are bringing on the millennium. The religious institutions of this age are its own glory, and the hope of every other yet to come. They are preparing the earth for its emancipation from the thraldom and misery under which it has been groaning for nearly six thousand years, and for the glorious liberty of truth, holiness, and happiness. At such a time will you be torpid at the centre of universal activity? Will you now refuse to sympathise with philanthropists, reformers, and evangelists? Never, no never, were the youth of any preceding generation called to a work so great, so noble, and so beneficent, as is offered to the young men of this generation. Never had they such an opportunity of signalising themselves by active benevolence, or were they in such danger of disgracing themselves by selfishness and indolence, as in the present day. "Begin early then to cherish a public spirit because if you do not possess this disposition in the

morning of life, you probably never will. This is a virtue that rarely springs up late in life. If it grow and flourish at all, it must be planted in youth, and be nourished by the warm sunshine and rain of the spring season of existence. He who cares only for himself in youth, will be a very niggard in manhood, and a wretched miser in old age."*

A young man rightly impressed with the circumstances of the age, will guard assiduously against its evils, for every age has its peculiar dangers, and the present one forms no exception to the general rule. I can only briefly enumerate those perils.

He will check and restrain an excessive love of pleasure, which in many cases leads to dissipation, in others unfits for business, and in far more altogether indisposes the mind for sober thought, mental culture, and true religion. This is one of the growing tendencies of the day in which we live, and threatens infinite damage to the present and eternal welfare of mankind, by bringing on an age of frivolity, sensuality, and practical atheism. Find your pleasure, young men, in the improvement of your mind, in attention to business, in true piety, and in active benevolence. Is there not scope enough for enjoyment here? "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Excessive worldliness is another of the dangers of this age. In a country, compared with which Phœnicia, Tyre, Carthage, and Corinth, viewed as commercial nations, were mere pedlars; and in an age, compared with which every other that has preceded it, was a

* Dr. Hawes' Lectures to Young Men.

time of stagnancy, there is most imminent peril of sinking into the mere worldling, and living only to get wealth. Never was competition so fierce, and never was there so great danger of having the conscience benumbed, the principle prostrated, the heart rendered callous, and even the intellect rifled of its strength, or sharpened only into cunning and duplicity by the love of money, as in the age in which we live. Wealth is the god of Britain's idolatry just now; and you, without watchfulness and prayer, are in danger of bowing devoutly at its shrine, becoming its worshippers, and immolating your souls as a burnt-offering on its altars.

Pride of intellect, leading to scepticism and infidelity, is a most fearful source of peril in this age. I have already alluded to the conflict now going on between the various forms of unbelief and Christianity. The struggle is eagerly maintained by both parties; and though to the sincere believer in Christianity there is no doubt how it will terminate, yet in the meanwhile there is great reason to fear, from the boldness and subtlety of the attacks of infidelity, that some, and not a few, victories will be gained by the opponents of Christianity. The natural bias of youth is almost always to infidelity. And such is the case, not merely because, as Bacon says, "a little philosophy inclines us to atheism, and a great deal of philosophy carries us back to religion;" but youth has an intellectual bias against religion, because it would humble the arrogance of the understanding, and a moral bias against it, because it would check the indulgence of the passions; and these two causes will account for

the prevalence of infidelity among so many young men of the present day. In an age when the mind of man is pouring out its prodigies in such profusion, there is imminent peril of believing it almost omnipotent, omniscient, and all-sufficient, and of man's accounting himself his own God, and feeling as if he needed no other. The tendency is to that Pantheism which, instead of saying nothing is God, says everything is God. Man-worship is the idolatry of the day, as well as money-worship. And yet notwithstanding the prodigies of intellect which man can and does accomplish, how little way does all go to make him either holy or happy. The profoundest philosopher and the noblest son of science, as much need a revelation from God to guide them in matters of religion and morals, as the peasant or the child.

Superstition, leading to formalism in religion, instead of the religion of the intellect, the heart, the conscience, and the life, is with some, though not so much with you, a danger of the age. Yet though it is chiefly among that portion of our race most under the influence of passion and imagination, that superstition gains its victories, it is evident from many facts that even the most masculine minds of your sex are not proof against the seductions of Popery and its cognate systems. And when we see over what mighty intellects this dreadful system has cast its shade or thrown its spell, and what gifted minds it has induced to drink of the Circean cup of its enchantments, we must not speak too strongly on the probability that none but the feeble or the imaginative will yield to its sorceries.

Young men, study then, seriously consider, and be duly impressed with, the dangers that characterise the age in which you live, dangers by which you are surrounded. I speak not now of the ordinary perils which apply to every age alike, the dangers arising from the ardour of passion, the pruriency of imagination, the influence of example, the love of companionship, the temptations to sensuality, to intemperance, to dishonesty, to extravagance, which beset the young man's path at all times: those have been already considered in the previous chapters. But I now speak of those which appertain to the age in which it is your lot to live. Do not be ignorant, insensible, or indifferent, in such a situation: or treat the subject with carelessness or levity. Ponder, devoutly ponder, the subject. As your protection from these perils, possess yourselves of personal religion. This, and this only, is your adequate defence. This is your shield and buckler. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Put your trust in God. With his fear before your eyes, and his love reigning in your hearts, you are safe, and will escape unscathed from all these perils to which you are constantly exposed.

Reflect then upon your condition. Here you are in being, existing not by your own choice, but by the appointment of Providence, in one of the most eventful eras that ever elapsed in the history of the world or the flight of time. For you, all preceding nations, ages, and generations, with all their mightiest men, and their greatest discoveries, events, inventions, and exploits, have existed. Whatever valour has won, science explored, art contrived, labour achieved, or

suffering purchased, has come down to you. For you heroes have bled on the field, martyrs suffered on the scaffold or at the stake, philosophers studied in the closet, monarchs reigned on the throne, statesmen legislated in the senate, and travellers crossed the desert or the ocean. All the light and experience of nearly six thousand years concentrate in your history. You receive the full benefit of the art of printing, the revival of letters, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and the English Revolution of the seventeenth. For you America has been disclosed in its secret solitude between the two great oceans. For you the British sway has been established in Asia and Africa. For you civil and religious liberty has been matured in its most unrestricted form. For you Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, and all the other institutions of Christian benevolence, have been established and made ready to your hands. All nations, all ages, all generations, have laboured, and you have entered into their labours. You stand surrounded with all the spoils of time, the wealth of nations, the achievements of humanity, and the gifts of Providence. And I now ask, "What manner of men ought you to be?"

So much for the past and the present, and then the future. What a future! Which of the seals is breaking for the next century! All men are fixing an eye of inquisitive curiosity and anxious expectation upon the unfolding of the scroll which contains the history of the next century. What may we not expect from and for humanity within that period! What may not be hoped for from science, the arts, learning, and religion!

All, all, under God, depends upon you and your coevals. Into your hands, as the generation that is next to be, must come the destinies of futurity. You, and others of your age, must cause the wheels of the world's progress to roll backward or forward. You, you are to determine the character of the next age, for you are to form it. Look over the world's intellectual and moral condition, its civilization and evangelization; look over the civil and religious interests of your country, its government, its laws, its liberties, its institutions; look over the state and extent of the church of Christ, the world's illuminator and regenerator; and recollect that all these interests are soon to be in your hands. You cannot escape from this trust, and the responsibility which it involves. Providence has fixed it upon you, and you cannot throw it off. For the manner in which you sustain these interests you are accountable not only to futurity, but at the bar of God. "Yon must exist, you must exist in the midst of society, burdened with the weighty responsibility that grows out of the relations you sustain to the living beings around you, and to the generations that are coming after you; and you must take the eternal consequences of living and acting in these deeply interesting circumstances."

Young men, is there nothing here that deserves and demands reflection? Perhaps you have never thought of it as you should: have never seriously considered the obligations imposed by the peculiar features of the age; and have never revolved the fact that the value, importance, and accountability of human life are to be measured, not by a fixed, but a variable scale, and

that they rise and fall according to circumstances. In innumerable cases, one man can now do in the common arts and manufactures what ten or twenty men could not do a century ago; and this is as true in regard to the operations of benevolence as it is to those of trade, and thus the value of existence, and the importance of individual existence, are far greater than they once were. A man is a man at all times, but he is more of a man as regards power and achievement at one time than another. In such a day as this, then, not only as related to the past but to the future, I again ask, and with all possible emphasis, "What manner of men ought you to be?" I want you to be worthy of what the past has done for you, of what the present confers upon you, and of what the future will demand from you. I am solicitous that you should not prove ungrateful to the one, or unfaithful to the other. I tremble lest the current of improvement which has flowed so strongly to you should flow languidly past you. I press again and again that question, What manner of men ought you to be? Yes; and I add to this question the apostle's words, "in all manner of holy conversation and godliness." For this, and this only, can prepare and fit you to become blessings in the highest sense of the term, to the age in which you live, or to those which will follow. It is this you need for yourselves, above all arts and sciences. Religion has done more to exalt human nature, and does exalt it more wherever it is possessed, than all other endowments combined. It is the noblest element of mental and moral growth, both in heaven and earth. Indeed no man can be

truly great, unless his mind is enlarged and his heart purified by its sacred power. This was the grace and glory of our first father, when he came glowing in moral beauty from the hand of his Creator. It gave elevation and grandeur of soul to prophets and apostles, sacred heroism to martyrs, and in modern days it placed high in the scale of being such men as Newton, Milton, Boyle, Locke, and Pascal. And while it is your own highest dignity and richest happiness, it will prove your mightiest instrument of power for the well-being of others. That which makes you Christians is that which would make you philanthropists. Do you wish to benefit and bless the world in the most extensive and most lasting manner, aim at its subjugation to the power of religion. The world is to be converted to Christ, the beauties of holiness are to cover every region, and the song of salvation is to float on every breeze. It is not science that is to hush the deepest groans of creation, nor the arts that are to wipe away the bitterest tears of humanity; these triumphs are reserved for religion. Many an humble follower of the Lamb who has paced the walks of the Crystal Palace, and surveyed with but partial knowledge its teeming wonders and indescribable beauties, will do more to bless his species in the way of direct moral and religious benefit, than any of the skilful artificers whose productions attracted the eyes and excited the admiration of gazing millions. One human soul possesses a value compared with which the unrivalled glories of that wonderful collection are but a thing of nought; the loss of one such soul would be an infinitely greater calamity than the

destruction of that whole building and all its contents by fire: while its salvation would be to him who obtains it a greater treasure than his possession of all that wealth of nations, and to him who achieves it a greater honour in the world of spirits, than to have contrived that palace, and to have crowded it with its matchless and innumerable wonders. What a motive to seek our own salvation first of all, and then to obey our high and noble calling to seek the salvation of our fellow-men! Rise, my young friends, to your high, your holy, and your beneficent calling; live for the present age, and send forward an influence through all future ages. Live for glory, honour, and immortality, and let nothing satisfy you, either for yourself or for others, but that which is eternal.

CHAPTER XII.

EARLY DEATH, OR THE REVIEW OF LIFE IN OLD AGE.

One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease, and quiet. JOB xxi, 22.

Now when he came nigh to the gates of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. LUKE vii, 12.

We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten: and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. PSALM xc, 10.

YOU remember, perhaps, the incident recorded of Xerxes, the Persian monarch, that when reviewing the mighty host, with which he was then invading Greece, and which numbered more than two millions of men, he burst into tears upon the reflection that when far less than a century had passed, not an individual of all those multitudes would remain alive Pity that he had not thought how many myriads of them his mad ambition was hurrying to the grave by the devastation of war! With like pensive, but more practical feelings, let us look over the population of our globe, and consider that, according to the average term of human life, nearly a thousand millions of im-

mortal beings pass from our world to their eternal doom every thirty years. What a conqueror is death! What an evil is sin, which is the cause of this mortality! What a world is that beyond the grave, where all these countless millions assemble! And what a being is God, who is the author of their separate existences, pursues each one through his whole individual history, and will not suffer one to be left forgotten in the grave, overlooked in the judgment, or left without his just and appropriate doom in the retribution of eternity! Are you in want of subjects for reflection and useful moralising? What themes are these! Man is born to die; death is ever doing its work; and the tide of mortality is ever setting in upon the shore of eternity, bearing with it all that belong to the human species. In looking at the race of Adam only in this aspect of it, in seeing one generation follow another to the grave in endless succession, like the various vegetable and animal tribes, we are ready to ask the question of the Psalmist, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" And truly if there were no other state of existence than this, there would be reason in the inquiry; for apart from immortality life is a dream, and man a shadow. Comparing the nobleness of his faculties with the shortness and uncertainty of his life, and the vanity of his pursuits, he would, if this world only were the sphere of his existence, seem to cast a reflection upon the wisdom of his Creator, who had invested him with the powers of an angel and yearnings after immortality, merely to mind earthly things. But with the eternal world thrown open to our view, and its state of rewards and

punishments disclosed to our faith, how momentous are that term and condition of existence which are granted us here as our discipline and probation for immortality! With far other feelings than those of contempt or complaint, I now echo the inquiry, "What is your life?" Death is an agent that works by no rule or order with which we are acquainted; sometimes passing by the aged to take the young; leaving the sickly to seize upon the healthy; removing the useful and sparing the worthless. This brings me to the subject of the present chapter, Early Death, or the Review of Life in Old Age.

Let us consider the first alternative. The young man may die. Indeed the fact recorded in the text is often repeated. It is in the order of nature for the aged to die, and for the young to live: but this order is not always observed. More deviations from it take place in the human race than in any other tribe of creatures. But few of the young of the inferior animals die of disease, compared with those of the human race. Life seems to be precarious in proportion to its value. What multitudes of young people die annually in this country of consumption, that bane of English youth! It is mournful to me to recollect how many beautiful flowers I have seen thus cut down in spring. I have during my ministry followed to the grave young persons in sufficient numbers, were they all still living, to form a congregation of no inconsiderable size. And what has been still is, and ever will be, in respect of the mortality of youth. There is always something affecting in the death of a young man. In some cases it realises the scene described by

the evangelist in one of the texts at the head of this chapter, "Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Her only comfort is removed, and the last light of her tabernacle is put out; her one tie to life is cut, and she feels left alone upon a bleak and desolate shore. In other cases it is the son of wealthy parents, whose brightest prospects hung suspended upon that one precious life, the termination of which causes them to repeat in sorrow, not perhaps unmixed with complaint, the words of Job, "He destroyeth the hope of man." In other instances it is the death of a youth of great promise; he had finished his education, served his apprenticeship, and with talents that excited the liveliest hopes of success, and with virtues that had already ensured admiration, was just about to step upon the stage of active life. He had formed, perhaps, a connection of chaste and tender love with one worthy of him, and with whom he expected soon to share the cup of connubial happiness; and then, when all was smiling around him, and he was returning so joyously its smiles, he is smitten down by death. Oh, to see that noble flower, when nearly full-blown, droop its head upon its stalk, wither, and die! How many tears are shed, how many hopes are disappointed, how many sorrowful voices exclaim, "What would he not have been had he lived?" When the aged man who has lived out his term expires, we are not surprised; we expected it, and were prepared for it. But for the young to die, for whom no fears or dread anticipations were cherished, strikes us not only with grief but with astonishment.

I will now put two cases before you.

I. That of the young man who dies a true Christian. He has remembered his Creator in the days of his youth, repented of sin, believed in Christ, lived in the fear of God. He has not forgotten or neglected religion. This was his mode of life when death came upon him. For the king of terrors pays no more respect to piety than to talent. Many a bright blossom of the church, as well as of the world, is nipped off by his relentless hand. The christian youth has often been removed, as well as the irreligious one. Such a young man, when he found he must die, felt serious, solemn, and at first somewhat sorrowful, on looking round on all he was parting from, on seeing the mists of the dark valley rising over the landscape which he had been accustomed to survey with so much delight, and on witnessing all his prospects suddenly fading before his eyes. But when his faith came to his relief, bringing with it the "everlasting consolation" of the Gospel, and "a good hope through grace, a hope full of immortality," he recovered his tranquillity, and in the prospect of that glory, honour, and eternal life, to which he believed he was going, he could then serenely look "On all he's leaving, now no longer his." We are ready to say, what hopes are buried in his tomb, what expectations of himself, his parents, and his friends! He was permitted to see, and even to touch, many things that were attractive and alluring, but to grasp nothing. He was conducted to an eminence whence he could survey a beautiful prospect as his seemingly destined possession, and then closed his eyes in death. He had but a fragment of existence,

and what made it all the more mournful was, that the fragment indicated how pleasant the whole would have been, had he been spared. Did he not live in vain? No, he did not live in vain. He answered the highest end of existence, as certainly as if he had lived out the threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, of man's existence; as if he had entered upon business and succeeded in obtaining wealth; as if he had married and had raised a numerous and respectable family; as if he had obtained rank, station, and influence in society, or renown. For what is the highest end of human life? The salvation of the immortal soul, a preparation and a portion for eternity, a meetness for heaven. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever. Now, the truly pious person has accomplished this end, has secured this object as completely, though he die at the age of twenty, as if he had lived to that of seventy. He says on his death-bed, "True there are some things I could have wished to live for, and I feel that in not being permitted to remain and accomplish them, I am giving up some of the secondary and inferior ends of existence, but I have fulfilled the one great end of life. I have obtained the one thing needful, even the salvation of my soul. I have accomplished the loftiest and most benevolent purpose of God in sending me upon earth. I have not lived in vain. He who is made for immortality, and has everlasting ages of pure delight before him, need not regret the loss of a few years of pleasure mixed with pain. I am upon the threshold of eternity, and have attended to that which will prepare me for an eternity of bliss. I am disappointed in the hope of some little things,

but I am not disappointed in the pursuit of far greater ones, and in the eternal fruition shall forget the momentary pain. I am parting from friends dear as life, but I am going to others still dearer. I am turning away from bright prospects, but infinitely brighter ones are opening upon my view. I am going away early from earth, but am going as early to heaven: and my existence in the former is shortened only that my existence in the latter may be extended. The connections who I am leaving pity me for my early death; the angels in Paradise congratulate me on so soon quitting a vale of tears, and so early retiring from all the trials, temptations, and dangers of this scene of conflict. I am now within sight of glory, and am all but absolutely certain of being safely brought to it. Who can tell but I am taken home to escape perils which might have been too great for my strength? I therefore die without murmuring, and depart with cheerful submission, though I die in youth, since it is to be with Christ, which is far better." Happy youth! Yes, happy, to have thy warfare thus early and successfully accomplished, to win the victory at the very commencement of the battle! So soon to gain and wear the crown! *

* I will give an illustration of this by a scene, part of which I witnessed myself. One Lord's-day, after the morning service, I was requested to visit a gentleman who was alarmingly ill, at one of our inns, on his way to Scotland. It is not my custom, for want of strength, to visit the sick on Sabbath-days, but this case was urgent, and I went. I was introduced to the sick chamber of a remarkably fine young man, of considerable worldly respectability, who was attended by two anxious sisters and a brother. They were bearing him home with many apprehensions that he would die on the road. My visit was one of solemn and mournful

II. But I must now turn to a class of young persons the reverse of all this: I mean those who die without religion. Alas! alas! what an idea! How sad, how mournful, how awful! To die without religion! To go out of the world without comfort in death, and without hope beyond it! And usually those who live without religion, die without it. Death-bed repentances are in most cases little to be thought of, and less to be depended upon. True repentance is never too late, but late repentance is rarely true. Religion is not like the act of a man who in a shipwreck is cast into the sea, and there in the greatest alarm, as a matter of necessity, lays hold of and grasps a plank as a means of saving himself from being drowned. But on the contrary it resembles the conduct of one who deliberately and by choice steps on board a vessel or boat, to convey him on some gainful

delight, for I found him a real Christian, expecting death hourly, but expecting it in the most serene and hopeful frame of mind, as his kind deliverer from the burden of the flesh. Since then I received from one of his sorrowing sisters the following account of his peaceful dismissal: "* * * He suffered greatly the last three weeks, but was enabled to bear all with much patience, feeling it came from the hand of a loving Father. His growth in grace was very rapid: he seemed to enjoy largely the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The Lord was most gracious in the support and comfort he vouchsafed to him. He often seemed lost in adoring wonder, contemplating the amazing love of God in Christ Jesus. Although he had much to make life to be enjoyed, he left earth without regret; indeed he said he should not like to return again to the world, except from one desire, that he might be honoured in doing something for the Saviour. When in much suffering, some hours before his death, it was said to him, 'Soon this will be ended, and then, happy, happy spirit!' He faintly replied, 'Happy even now.' Amongst his last words were, 'Peace, Peace.'"

Are you, if called to die in youth, prepared to die so happy?

or pleasurable voyage. And therefore those who live without religion, I repeat, generally die without it. Everything renders the death of a young man who dies without religion peculiarly melancholy. He has no comfort in death ; on the contrary, he has most melancholy reflections. Comfort in death can come only from religion. The petrifying process of a stoical philosophy, or of a hardening infidelity, may, and sometimes does, so turn a man's heart into stone, that he may acquire a stupid insensibility even in death ; but actual comfort can come only from religion. It is the hope of immortality alone which can be as a lamp in the dark valley of the shadow of death, and the man destitute of it passes through the gloomy region either in perturbation and mental agony or in sullen indifference. In this case there are also the vexation, disappointment, and distress, of giving up life so early. A feeling of mortification springs up, akin to that of a person reluctantly called away at the commencement of a pleasurable scene which he intensely wishes to see completed, while others are left behind still to enjoy it after his departure. For a while he resists and resents the thought of dying. He clings to life with a tenacity which looks as if he could not, would not, dare not, die. He sends for his companions, who endeavour to cheer him and persuade him he will yet do well, and he talks with them of plans of future enjoyment, when he shall recover. Disease however progresses, and extinguishes these hopes : and at last comes, first the dreadful fear, and then the still more dreadful certainty, that he cannot live. Thoughts such as these are in his mind, although

he may be afraid to give utterance to them in language. "It is really a very hard case to die so young. Before I have well tried what life is, to be thus hurried out of it! To have ties so tender, and only just formed, severed! To see all my hopes so soon and so suddenly cut off, and all my prospects shut up! To have the cup of pleasure dashed from my lips, just as I had begun to sip it, and before I had taken one full draught! To see others of my own age in full health, pursuing their schemes, and likely to live and prosper, while I am dying and going down to the grave! How cruel is inexorable fate! How I almost wish I had never been born! For what has this short life proved to me but a disappointment? My existence has been rather a shadow than a substance, a mockery rather than a realisation of hope. I have lived only for this world, which I am now leaving for ever, and have made no provision or preparation for that on which I am about to enter. I have neglected my soul and have forgotten God. I am wrecked at the commencement of the voyage of life, and shall perish, with all that belongs to me, both as a mortal and immortal creature." How distressing to meet death in such a frame as this, so cold, so hopeless, so comfortless, and cheerless! A young man dying without religion is, according to his own views and reflections, cut off, without having seen, known, or enjoyed much of life. He has not had his share of life's business, enjoyments, and possessions. His views of his case are quite correct. He is withdrawn from the gay circle, and the scenes of business, as soon as he has entered them; and as he has lived without religion, and secured the possession

of nothing else, he has lived in vain. His case is the very opposite of that which I have considered in the former part of this chapter. He has not sought the one great end of existence, the salvation of his immortal soul, and all the secondary and inferior ends are failing him. The supreme objects of our being, which God proposed to him, he turned away from; and the inferior ones, which he proposed to himself, are turning away from him. He lived only for this world, and the Deity to which he consecrated his life left him almost as soon as he entered his service. He has had no time to gain worldly wealth or distinction, and has wilfully put away from him the opportunity, which he once possessed, to lay up treasures in heaven: and there he now lies, with all his hopes of time a wreck, and no hope of heaven or immortality rising up in their place. Follow him on to eternity. He finds there no compensation for what he has lost here. It is not in his case as it is in that of the religious young man, whose early death is so much taken from earth to be added to heaven; for he has not sought heaven and has no portion there. He has lost the possession and enjoyment of both worlds at once; his few fleeting pleasures on earth are not followed with the fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, and the pleasures that are for evermore in his presence. He has been suddenly hurried away from the springs of earthly delight, and no fountain in heaven, no "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb," comes in to supply their place. Earth rolls from beneath his feet, and heaven stoops not to sustain and receive his sinking

spirit. He rises not to glory as does the young departing Christian, exulting as he looks on the fading scenes of terrestial beauty, and exclaiming, "I have lost nothing." It is his, on the contrary, as he resigns his spirit, mournfully to confess, "I have lost everything. I am early driven out of earth, and the portals of heaven open not to receive me." Nor is this all; for the death of an irreligious young man reaches the climax of its distress and misery in the consideration that his early removal is so much time taken from the occupations, possessions, and pleasures of earth, to be added to the bitter pains of eternal death, the inconceivable torments of the bottomless pit. To the religious man who dies in youth, whatever he may part from, still death is gain. He gains infinitely more than he can lose; but the irreligious young man not only loses all he had, and all he hoped for on earth, but gets nothing in exchange but the loss of his soul's salvation with it, and has in his miserable condition the agony of contrasting what he has left on earth with what he has to endure in the dark world of hell. He will not have the poor, wretched, meagre, satisfaction, if such it can be called, of reflecting that on his way to perdition, he had his fill of earthly pleasure and business, and, like the rich man, lived long and fared sumptuously every day, before he descended to that place of torment. On the contrary, he will have through eternity to reflect that he received nothing in exchange for his soul but the vices and follies of youth, and sacrificed his immortal interest, for the pleasures of sin, confined, as in his case they were, to the brief season of his

short life. O! how mean, how insignificant a price this for which to barter away immortal bliss! How far below even the folly and impiety of that profane man who sold his birthright for one morsel of meat!

These things, young men, are submitted to your most serious consideration. Presume not upon long life. Millions die in youth every year. How know you that you will not be included in the million deaths this year? You are in robust health. What says the patriarch Job? "One dieth in his full strength." Accident may crush you in a moment. Fever may seize you, and, after a few days' delirium, during which no place may be found for repentance, may send you to the bar of God. Or the seeds of consumption may already be sown and germinating in your frame. Death may have selected you for his victim; the arrow may be fitted to the string, the aim taken, and the shaft about to fly to the mark. Should you die as you now are, will yours be the death of the religious or the irreligious young man? Which? Let this question sink deeply into your heart.

Still, it must be conceded to you that you may live to old age: and I will now take up the other alternative, and suppose that this privilege, if privilege it may be called, will be granted to you. I will imagine that by the ordination of Providence you will number threescore years and ten, or fourscore years. You will then have to review life. Memory will naturally revert to the past. Who arrives at the top of a hill without turning to look back? Who ends a long journey without reconsidering its incidents? And who

comes to old age without some thoughts of the years that have elapsed, and the scenes that have intervened since the time that he also was a boy? Memory can never be inactive, unless indeed it has altogether perished amidst the wreck of the faculties which old age sometimes produces. It will, it must, look back. What kind of an old age would you like to have? How, and with what reflections and reminiscences, would you wish to spend the close of life? Would you have it bright and serene, with pleasant and peaceful recollections, and "calm as summer evenings be;" or rendered cloudy, dark, and stormy, by a painful retrospect and a troubled conscience? I am aware that there are some persons so little given to reflection, others so stupified by the paralysing influence of old age, and some so fully occupied to the last with the pursuits and cares of this world, as to go out of life, even at its most advanced period, without serious consideration of either the past or the future. But what a melancholy spectacle is an unreflecting old man, a human being coming to the close of a long earthly existence, and yet not looking back with the question, "How have I lived, and what have I done with all those years which my Creator has given to me!" Such cases, however, one would hope, are comparatively few.

The retrospect of life is in every view of it a solemn affair; indeed, the most solemn except the account to be rendered at the judgment-day. Each portion of existence as it passes, every year, month, week, day, demands a retrospective survey, with the question, "How has it been spent?" How much more a whole life! Man has but one life on earth, and that one can

never be recalled, whatever mistakes may have been made. Oh! what momentous interests are bound up in that one life! And it must all be accounted for to God. What an impressive spectacle is that of an old man spending the evening of life in turning over the leaves of his history, and reading those records which are to be the ground of his condemnation or acquittal at the bar of God, before which he must soon take his stand! How solemn a position is it to be placed where childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, with all their good or evil, will pass before, not only the memory, but the judgment and the conscience, in a series of dissolving views!

Oh! how much is comprehended in the term of only one man's lengthened existence! How many various and momentous acts, scenes, and events, pass before the mind of the aged man, in reviewing his pilgrimage on earth! There is time, with all its scores of years, its hundreds of months, its thousands of weeks, its myriads of days, to say nothing of its minutes and moments. There are the end and purpose for which the whole was given. There are all the means of grace and the opportunities of salvation which have been granted him; the Bible, with all its doctrines and duties, promises and precepts, invitations and threatenings; thousands of Sabbaths and sermons and sacramental seasons; the instructions of his parents, the counsels of friends, the ministrations of his pastor, and the books he has read; the striving of God's Spirit, and the remonstrances of his own conscience. There are all his opportunities of doing good and getting good neglected or improved; all he has done, and all he has

not done which he might have done. There are the sins or virtues of his childhood, youth, manhood and old age. There is his conduct as a tradesman in getting money, whether by good or bad means. There is the manner in which the relations of life have been discharged by him, and his behaviour as a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a master, or a servant. There is the use that he has made of prosperity or adversity. There is his kindness or cruelty to others. There is the manner in which he has disappointed or fulfilled the expectations that were formed concerning him. There are the recollections of the temptations which he has thrown in the way of others or which he has been exposed to himself, and which he has resisted or yielded to. What a landscape to look over, what a road to turn back upon, what a scene to survey, what a history to read! How much of all this is crowded into threescore years and ten! What an employment is the review of life! To spend the long evening of old age in conference with our conscience over our past existence of probation, and our future state of retribution! Oh! to see the unrepented, unforgiven sins of threescore years and ten occupying the lengthened space, and to hear voices from within and without, saying, "You have lost your life, your soul, your God, your all!" In that situation there will be many things that will alike appear to all. All will be impressed with the brevity of life. All will echo the language of the apostle, "What is our life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth but a little while, and straitway vanisheth away." All will look back upon a chequered scene of light and shade, though some have had more light,

and some more shade than others. All will have proved, more or less, the uncertain and unsatisfying nature of what is earthly, though some have made better use than others of their knowledge. But still there is a strange and melancholy difference of character and of feeling with which the impressive survey of life is made.

Consider the infidel reviewing life: if indeed there be a man who can persist in his creed of negations till he has reached threescore years and ten. What has he to look back upon? He has cut himself off from the prospect of immortality, and reduced himself to the idea of a mere ephemeron which, having fluttered through its brief day, is about to sink into the darkness and the sleep of eternal night, into nothing. Behind him in the past is mere animalism: before him in the future is annihilation. He has lived without faith, and is dying without hope. He would have no God, and he will have no heaven. Life with him has been spent (O what a pursuit!) in persuading himself, and endeavouring to persuade others, that man is only a rational brute. He has worn out a long term of years in hostility to the Bible, and in enmity to religion. He has ever been at war with that which others have counted their richest honour and their dearest bliss. His business, delight, and endeavour have been to oppose the Bible, to dash the cup of consolation from the lips of the mourner, to rob the widow of her last possession, to take from youth its safest guide, and from age its strongest prop. Humane and beneficent purpose! Miserable man, to have grown grey in attempting to put out the light of the moral sun, and

to die after all in despair of that result being ever accomplished; and to die, not without occasional and horrible fears, and still more horrible forebodings, that he has been fighting against God. May this dreadful retrospect never be yours.

Now contemplate the aged man of pleasure. And here the picture shall be drawn from life, and shall be no imaginary portrait. You shall hear the testimony of one "by whom the world, with its fashions and its follies, its principles and its practices, has been proposed in form to Englishmen, as the proper object of their attention and devotion. Lord Chesterfield has avowed as much with respect to himself, and by his writings said in effect to it, 'Save me, for thou art my god.' He has tendered his assistance to act as priest upon the occasion, and conduct the ceremonial. At the close of life however his god he found was about to forsake him, and therefore was forsaken by him. You shall hear some of his last sentiments and expressions, which have not been hitherto, so far as I know, duly noticed and applied to their use, that of furnishing an antidote (and they furnish a very powerful one) to the noxious poisons contained in his volumes. They are well worthy your strictest attention. 'I have seen,' said this man of the world, 'the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is in truth very low; whereas those who have not experienced always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare. But I have been behind the scenes: I have seen all the coarse pullies and dirty ropes which

exhibit and move the gaudy machines: I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry, and bustle, and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look upon all that is passed as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions; and by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No, for I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that he has become mine enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey.' When a christian priest speaks slightingly of the world, he is supposed to do so in the way of his profession, and to decry through envy the pleasures he is forbidden to taste. But here I think you have the testimony of a witness every way competent. No man ever knew the world better, or enjoyed more of its favours, than this nobleman. Yet you see in how poor, abject, and wretched a condition, at the time when he most wanted help and comfort, the world left him, and he left the world. The sentences above cited from him, compose, in my humble opinion, the most striking and affecting sermon upon the vanity of the world, ever yet preached to mankind."* Such was the confession in old age, to a son, (who afterwards died by his own hand,) of Lord Chesterfield, the

* Bishop Horne's Sermons.

oracle of fashionable life, and no mean statesman. Would you spend the evening of life thus?

You may now turn to the old age of the unreclaimed prodigal. He who in youth settled to no business, practised no virtue, feared not God, nor regarded man, but, bursting through the restraints of parental authority, and trampling under foot the laws of prudence and morality, gave himself up to the indulgences of passion, and plunged into the depths of vice. Such was his youth. His manhood was little better; it had the addition of being a constant struggle against the poverty and want which were the consequences of his misconduct. The wonder is that he lived so long, that human nature could survive what he had passed through. The wintry season has come upon him, and oh! what a winter, how bleak and desolate! His circumstances, how deplorably necessitous; his mind, how intolerably wretched! In some cases the poor creature is dependent upon the bounty of friends; bounty never bestowed but with reluctance, because bestowed upon one so unworthy, and rather flung at him in anger, than given with courtesy and kindness: in other instances, he is driven to the necessity of picking up, by various mean and discreditable artifices, a poor and precarious living. Destitute of all but necessaries, and having comparatively few of them, his miserable existence seems protracted for no purpose but to show what a wretched old age is made by a vicious youth. To him appertains the language of one of Job's friends, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." But his poverty is the least part of his misery, for he has, and can have, no peace of mind. When he reflects at all, his thoughts prey, like vultures, upon his peace, and he is unable to

drive them away. For him the retrospect is indeed most painful. Life with him has been worse than a blank. On what a dark and winding course has he to turn his affrighted gaze! What follies and what sins meet his eye at every turn! Childhood, youth, and manhood, are all alike distressing in retrospect. Not one bright or verdant spot presents itself to his survey in either. Oh! that some oblivious draught could drive the whole from his memory, and that, with the recollections of the past, could be extinguished the anticipations of the future! He is as little respected by others as he respects himself. No eye beams upon him with affection, no countenance greets him with a smile, no voice addresses to him the language of respect, no heart yields to him its sympathy, no door is thrown open to welcome him. He is an outcast from society, a burden to his friends, (if he has any left,) a torment to himself, and a nuisance to the earth on which he walks. He is one of sin's most miserable slaves, one of Satan's most degraded vassals, and one of hell's most fitting denizens. Of all the spectacles upon earth, the most melancholy, therefore, is such a wicked old man. Look at it, my young friends, and tremble.

I next exhibit the aged worldling, the man who has lived exclusively for wealth, who has realised his wishes, and who spends the evening of his life in thinking upon his treasures, and the toil and anxiety it has cost him to acquire them. And what are his reflections? In some cases, I have no doubt, there is a feeling of gratification at his success. He retraces his gradual rise and prosperity in life with gleeful delight, and compares himself with other less happy adventurers. His imagination revels in his wealth, and he thinks how much he is leaving to his heirs.

Poor creature, and this is all! No gratitude to God; no recollection of money got by his blessing, or spent for his glory; no testimony of his conscience, that he has honoured God with his substance; no pleasurable reminiscences of good done with his property; no expectation of hearing God say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" No, nothing but the reflection that he has been what the world calls a fortunate man, and has amassed so many thousands of pounds. What a bald, meagre, and wretched retrospect, that he has scraped together so much money, and will be said, whenever he quits the world, to have died rich! But there are others whose thoughts go deeper than all this, and who are not privileged (if the phrase may be used) with so much insensibility. Their review of life is far more painful, as their folly in living only to get money comes out to their view. "I have been successful," will such a one say, "I have worked hard, even as I have lived long; and have been a thriving man. I shall certainly leave much behind, but what is it now to me? I am an old man and must soon be a dying man. I am not permitted to remain with it nor can I take it with me. The only pleasure now left me, is to say whose it shall be when I am gone. Is it for this I have lived and laboured? Have I not been too busy in getting wealth either to enjoy it or employ it? Have I not laid up treasure on earth, instead of heaven? Have I not been so much taken up for myself, as to forget God and my fellow creatures? Am I prepared to give an account of this property? Have I not too much reason to ask the solemn question, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his

soul?' Can I not, do I not, enter painfully into Solomon's experience, when in disgust and penitence he looked back, and seeing the sins, the follies and pleasures of his apostacy, exclaimed, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity?'"

Would you spend old age in indulging such reflections? Is this the retrospect you would have?

I present one more character looking back upon life's eventful journey, and that is the aged Christian. He too reviews life, and with adoring wonder, gratitude, and joy. He has no fear of the past, no dread of the future. How calm and how peaceful are his reflections! How pleasant is the retrospect, and how much more bright and glorious the prospect! "Blessed," he exclaims, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has led and guarded me all my life; who having been the guide of my youth, and the benefactor of my manhood, is now the support of my old age. I adore him with unutterable gratitude, for calling me early, by his grace, to be a partaker of true religion, which has been a source of happiness, a means of prosperity, and an instrument of usefulness to me through a long and chequered life. Through Divine goodness, I have been kept from vice and folly and have risen to respectability and usefulness; and I owe it all to religion. I have corrupted none by infidel principles, nor seduced any from the path of integrity by immoral conduct; but on the contrary, while I am deeply humbled that I have not better improved my opportunities and my talents, I hope I have done some good by my example, my property, and my prayers. Life with me has not been a blank, either as regards myself or others. I know that as a man, and a sinful man, I must rely for salvation

exclusively upon the infinite merit of the Saviour; but still I rejoice to be able to say, as a Christian man, 'I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life, which God, the righteous judge, will bestow upon me in that day.' Providence has given me a long life, and grace has made it a comfortable, and I hope a useful one; and now I can lay it willingly down under the influence of a hope full of immortality." Venerable saint! "Thy hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness." How cloudless and majestic is thy setting sun! Recollecting thy holy, blameless, and useful life, all respect and many love thee. The young delight to show thee reverence, and the aged to manifest esteem.

My young friends, which of these characters would you be in the evening of life? Which kind of old man would you be? With which class of reflections would you survey life from the extreme verge of your earthly existence? How would you look forward to eternity at the close of a protracted existence? With the dread of punishment for all the unpardoned sins of threescore years and ten; or with the anticipations of gracious reward for all the holy actions of that long period?

Life is before you now. Ask the question seriously, solemnly, frequently, "What is my life?" Soon it will be behind you. Consider it well, its chief purpose; its brevity, its uncertainty; the smallness of its available portion for any useful end; its relative proportion to eternity; and its moral influence and bearing upon eternity. Life is probationary, and there is no other probation. All that follows belongs to retribution. It is the causal period, and the only period of causation. Everything beyond is effect. It is the little pivot of

existence, on which turns the immense and immeasurable whole. It is preparatory. Here we sow, here we are always sowing, and here only we sow. Hereafter we reap, and shall for ever do nothing but reap. It is a term for which we have to account, and the judgment to come will be founded on it. Though we shall be accountable beings as long as we exist, yet it is this short prefatory portion of our existence that is to determine the character of all the rest. The actions of this little life decide for eternity. This is a consideration of unparalleled power and weight. Let it be contemplated and felt. We are acting for eternity: ages of retribution will answer to this hour of probation. How circumspectly then ought we to live! If such be the consequences of life, how frugal ought we to be of all its moments! A little care and effort now, and all will be safe for ever. A little providence and painstaking through the short period of your earthly existence, and you will have made your fortune for immortality.

How momentous then is life! How important to think of this when it is commencing! Who should not prepare to live? Life—the day of salvation, the harbinger of death, the season of grace, the subject of the judgment, the preparation for eternity, the opportunity for heaven, the pathway to hell! What a solemn exercise to review life at its close! First to ask ourselves, "What have I done with life?" and then almost immediately afterwards to hear God saying, "What hast thou done with life?"

Behold the Judge standeth at the door! And

> "This is the summons that He brings,
> Awake! for on this transient hour,
> Thy long eternity depends."

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